



SUNAK UNLEASHES ATTACK ON WORKERS AND POOR

Why his plan to deal with the cost of living crisis is a fraud >>Page 17

BIDEN ADMITS HE'S AFTER REGIME CHANGE IN RUSSIA

>>Page 3

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BORIS JOHNSON MUST GO



Boris Johnson addressing British troops stationed in Estonia earlier this month. They are part of a Nato build up to possible intervention in Ukraine

UKRAINE

The great power grab—imperialism and the war

THE mainstream media present the war in Ukraine as a struggle between “democracy”, and “authoritarianism”.

Even some thinkers on the left say it can't be seen as an inter-imperialist war.

But Alex Callinicos shows why imperialism is the best way to explain the conflict.

>>Pages 10&11

JOBS



Shut down the ports to stop P&O sackings

P&O WORKERS had until Thursday this week to accept an “enhanced” redundancy package. Bosses hope that workers will sign up and effectively accept their sackings.

Unions urgently need to hit P&O's profits by stopping the ships from sailing and blocking the ports.

>>Page 20

RUSSIA

Is Vladimir Putin pulling all of the strings?

DOES THE drive for a new Russian empire simply reflect the needs of president Putin?

His decision to invade Ukraine is often ascribed to his bad temper or personal ambitions. If only it were that simple. We look at the state machine behind Putin.

>>Pages 14&15

WAGE WAR ON TORIES

- NO TO RUSSIA'S UKRAINE INVASION
- NO TO NATO MILITARY ESCALATION
- FIGHT IMPERIALISM EVERYWHERE

Lockdown lies and Ukraine war—two sides of rotten system
>>Page 5



THE THINGS THEY SAY

‘Will woke judges and police enforce the law? Will the race industry tolerate such measures from a Tory minister—even a female with a Ugandan-Indian immigrant background?’

Trevor Kavanagh launches his annual spring offensive on immigrants in the Sun

‘The British Empire had many egregious flaws but it remains a remarkable and indelible part of this country’s heritage.’

The **Daily Mail** newspaper tries to salvage the Royal trip to the Caribbean

‘Dear God, it couldn’t have been more colonial if he had worn a pith helmet and driven a tank through the streets of Kingston.’

Jan Morin in the **Daily Mail** is less convinced



US set to spend billions more on weapons of destruction

US PRESIDENT Biden wants £620 billion for US military spending for the 2023 fiscal year, anonymous US officials told Bloomberg news.

That’s £25 billion more than even the £595 billion for military spending included in the massive spending bill he signed earlier in March.

It’s more than was spent at the height of the Korean or Vietnam Wars. It’s £75 billion more than was spent at the height of the Cold War under president Ronald Reagan.

Some £585 billion of the new total would go to the Pentagon. The rest will be for other government agencies’ military spending, including nuclear weapons programme.

The generals and Biden think that Russia’s invasion of Ukraine means they can ask for whatever they want now for war.

With Republicans and Democrats baying for ever-more money for Nato and the US forces, he won’t face much

opposition. Biden’s arms inventory includes almost £100 billion for research and development of “advanced weapons” such as the hypersonic missiles whose use by Russia is denounced by the West.

But there’s also £110 billion for new and battle-tested armaments. According to Bloomberg, items on the top of the buy list include 61 F-35 fighter jets from Lockheed Martin, the purchase of the new B-21 bomber from Northrop Grumman, and two Virginia-class submarines from General Dynamics.

● **TAKING ADVANTAGE** of the sharpening military manoeuvres across the world, North Korea announced last week that it had successfully launched its largest intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) in a test.

The Hwasong-17 was first unveiled in 2020 at a parade where its colossal size surprised even seasoned analysts.

Last week’s launch marked the first time the country has tested an ICBM since 2017. The government ordered the test because of the “daily-escalating

military tension in and around the Korean peninsula”.

It spoke of the “inevitability of the long-standing confrontation with the US imperialists accompanied by the danger of a nuclear war,” the official news agency for North Korea, reported.

ICBMs are long-range missiles, capable of reaching the US.

Japanese officials said the missile flew to an altitude of 6,000km and fell in Japanese waters after flying for more than an hour.

● **OKSANA POKALCHUK**, the Amnesty International coordinator in Ukraine, documented last week the way the Ukrainian government’s martial law is acting in an oppressive way. “Ukraine banned most men of age 18-60 from leaving the country. Unfortunately, it is having an unjustified impact on some groups of men, especially men with disabilities,” she tweeted last week. “These limitations have especially problematic effects on disabled men, and men with sole responsibility for their children.”

An uncertain fate

● **THE UNITED States** has transferred Patriot anti-missile interceptors to Saudi Arabia recently to smooth relations with a country that can pump more oil into global markets and replace Russian production. Saudi Arabia has been demanding the system to use in its war on Yemen. The Saudi-led coalition has stepped up the war in Yemen during the Ukraine invasion.

UN slams apartheid against Palestinians

THE UNITED Nations special rapporteur on human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories has said the situation there amounts to apartheid.

Michael Lynk’s report to the UN Human Rights Council is damning. It finds that Israeli Jews and Palestinians live “under a single regime which differentiates its distribution of rights and benefits on the basis of national and ethnic identity, and which ensures the supremacy of one group over, and to the detriment of, the other.”

It sets out how this system “endows one racial-national-ethnic group with substantial rights,

benefits and privileges while intentionally subjecting another group to live behind walls, checkpoints and under a permanent military rule”.

This “satisfies the prevailing evidentiary standard for the existence of apartheid”.

Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Israel’s B’Tselem have all recently said Israel is guilty of apartheid.

Please, will no one think of the oligarchs?

AMID ALL the suffering in Ukraine, will nobody think of oligarch Petr Aven?

The Financial Times highlights the problems of Aven, a Russian former academic, politician and businessman who was worth £4.5 billion last month.

Now he faces sanctions and plaintively asks, “Will I be allowed to have a cleaner, or a driver?”

“I don’t drive a car. Maybe my stepdaughter will drive. We don’t understand how to survive.”

“Our business is completely destroyed. Everything which we were building for 30 years is

now completely ruined.

Even his family was hit. The paper goes on, “In the days before European banks froze cross-border transactions with Russia, Aven’s wife spent time in London on an urgent mission—travelling around cash machines taking out as much money as she could to prepare for what was to come.”

“Now he says he does not know if he can pay even the most basic of bills.”

These are truly the real victims.

First strike nukes back on

US president Joe Biden is now prepared to unleash nuclear weapons first in “extreme circumstances”. He last week abandoned a campaign pledge to say they would only ever be used as retaliation.

His U-turn came after pressure from Nato military allies and the Pentagon armed forces establishment.

The US currently allows itself to use nuclear weapons to “defend the vital interests of the United States, its allies and partners”, as well as in response to “significant non-nuclear strategic attacks”.

For years Biden has said he wants to rein that back.

But his new policy will still allow them to be used in “extreme circumstances” as a deterrent against chemical, biological, massive conventional and even potentially cyber attacks, officials told a newspaper.

War in Ukraine boost for gas

THE CITIGROUP bank has some cheering analysis on energy prices.

It thinks surging coal use in China will displace its imports of liquefied natural gas (LNG) used in power plants, freeing up hydrocarbons for the rest of the world.

The planet might be given another lurch towards destruction but at least this will make up for the loss of Russian supplies as a result of the Ukraine war.

China became the world’s biggest importer of sea borne gas last year. Now it’s wildly adding coal capacity.

It produced 687 million tonnes of coal in the first two months of this year, a 10 percent rise from a year before

Citigroup is telling clients that global gas prices could fall over the second half of this year as diverted LNG floods the world market.

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President Biden's blunder reveals deadly war games

AN INTERVIEW by Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky last Sunday kicked away some of the key justifications that are supposed to justify Nato's escalation against Russia.

He said Ukraine would declare "neutrality," promise not to develop nuclear weapons, and formally withdraw its plan to join Nato.

Speaking to Russian independent journalists ahead of key negotiations this week, Zelensky said he was putting forward the compromise if Russia withdrew troops.

Had such a plan been presented a few weeks ago, it would probably have averted the present war.

It is a long way from the repeated claims that Nato must pour in weapons and risk a nuclear war in order to defend "Ukraine's right to join Nato".

But now the concession is backed by details that will probably mean the Russians don't accept it.

Zelensky's solution would mean although Ukraine wouldn't technically join Nato, it would be protected militarily by Nato allies.

"Effective security guarantees for our state are mandatory," he said.

It's an attempt at clever political sidestepping that doesn't remove a central motivation behind the Ukraine war—Russia's attempt to stem Nato expansion on its doorstep.

Conduct

He also said he would conduct separate negotiations regarding the disputed territory of the Crimea peninsula, and the Donbas and Luhansk regions, which Russia is attempting to take control of.

Meanwhile, US president Joe Biden ramped up the pressure on Putin by threatening regime change.

During a speech in Poland on Saturday, he said Vladimir Putin "cannot remain in power".

Biden did not mean he was banking on a new revolution in Russia. He was

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY

laying out wholly new objectives for the war in Ukraine that cannot stop until the Russian president has been toppled.

It's the arrogance of US military power that it believes it can dictate who is or is not in charge of any country.

And it's even clearer the West wants Ukraine wholly subordinate to US power and Nato troops if Russia is defeated. The White House immediately sought to "clarify" Biden's

comments, insisting his statement should not be taken as official policy.

But it fits with the rampant escalation of the past week.

His "mistake" was to say openly what until now has been shrouded in talk about freedom. His openness embarrassed his allies and panicked his advisers.

On Sunday US secretary of state, Antony Blinken said, "We do not have a strategy of regime change in Russia—or anywhere else, for

that matter." And Josep Borrell, the European Union's chief diplomat, France's president Emmanuel Macron and even Boris Johnson's officials distanced themselves from Biden's remarks.

Biden has blundered. His speech uttered views that are best kept for secret cabals.

They will reinforce the belief held in much of the world that the Russian invasion is terrible but the US is also a murderous bully.

Promises of endless war

JOE BIDEN underlined his threats of escalation by offering a nightmarish vision of the future in his speech in Poland on Saturday.

"In this battle, we need to be clear-eyed," he said.

"This battle will not be won in days, or months, either. We must commit now, to be in this fight for the long haul. There will be a cost but it's a price we have to pay."

Biden's recent worrying comments come in stark contrast to his electioneering in 2019. Back then, he said it was "past time to end the forever wars, which have

Presiden Biden

cost us untold blood and treasure."

And he used the US forces' exit from Afghanistan to boast that his election promise was fulfilled. Yet just two years into office, Biden is stoking up the prospect of a long scale war in Europe as well as firing shots at China.

Biden reiterated a warning to Chinese president Xi Jinping, and told him there would be "consequences" for supporting Putin.

Although China claims to be neutral on the war, it was the only member to agree to a Russian resolution at last week's United Nation's security council.

It will be ordinary people in Ukraine and elsewhere that will be told to pay the price in blood and strangled living standards.

The speech means even more significant escalation immediately—and fierce confrontation for so long as Putin stays in power.

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US trades oil for more power

BIDEN'S ADMINISTRATION is also pushing to extend its power over the region economically.

It wants to supply 15 billion cubic metres of liquefied natural gas to the European Union in an attempt to bypass Russian fossil fuels.

Russia supplies 40 percent of the gas the EU needs for heating and power general and more than a quarter of its oil imports.

The war leaves European Union leaders scrambling desperately to get their hands on energy supplies.

The 27 member states agreed to negotiate gas prices altogether as a bloc, but remained split on whether to ban Russian gas

altogether. Biden also led calls for tightening the economic pressure on Russia by creating an EU and Nato led body to track if sanctions were being broken.

He demanded "a system whereby we have an organisation looking at who has violated any of these sanctions, and where and when and how they violate them."

Ships filled with liquefied natural gas

Nato lays out plans for military escalation in Ukraine

by CHARLIE KIMBER

THE NATO military alliance met last Thursday to cement and extend its expansion into eastern Europe.

The council of war, gathering in Brussels in Belgium, scented the opportunity to recast the shape of the world and stamp the West's authority.

After the summit, Nato secretary general Jens Stoltenberg said, "We will continue to impose unprecedented costs on Russia. Leaders approved our four new Nato battlegroups in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia."

There are now eight multinational Nato battlegroups, from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. Stoltenberg emphasised "there are 100,000 US troops supporting Nato efforts backed by major air and naval power".

In the run-up to the summit, US president Joe Biden met with businessmen at the White House.

He reassured them, "We're all capitalists in this room". He went on, "We are at an inflection point, I believe in the world. It occurs every three or four generations.

"As one of the top military people said to me in a secure meeting the other day, 60 million people died between 1900 and 1946. And since then, we've established a liberal world order. A lot of people dying—but nowhere near the chaos."

Shifting

Then came the punchline, "And now is a time when things are shifting. There's going to be a new world order out there, and we've got to lead it."

That means an attempt to reassert US power not just against Russia, but also China.

The summit statement declared that "Russia's war against Ukraine has shattered peace in Europe"—presumably unlike Nato's war in Yugoslavia in 1999.

It praised the "massive sanctions imposed on Russia". And called on China "to cease amplifying the

BACK STORY

Nato is putting huge resources into its response

● Some 100,000 US troops are backing up Nato efforts in sea and air

● Biden's government is using doomsday planes, which cost £150 million each

● Boris Johnson is sending £25 million for the Ukrainian military

● It all comes as the cost of living crisis squeezes ordinary people across the world

Kremlin's false narratives, in particular on the war and on Nato".

Boris Johnson arrived just after an announcement that the British government is sending another 6,000 missiles to Ukraine along with £25 million for its military.

And plane spotters noticed a "doomsday plane" flying over Britain, designed to be an airborne base for the US during nuclear war.

The Boeing 747 E4-B aircraft, which the US has a fleet of, can remain in the air for days and withstand the electromagnetic pulse from a nuclear blast.

The summit's decisions were partly a response to Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky, who last Wednesday hit out at Western nations for not doing enough.

"Freedom must be armed," Zelensky said. "The Ukrainian sky has not been made safe." He added the summit would show "who is a friend, who is a partner, and who betrayed us for money".

It's clear Zelensky will keep pressing for the no-fly zone. That would lead to a sure pathway towards nuclear war.

But even if there isn't a no-fly zone, more and more arms and soldiers poured into eastern Europe makes a wider war much more likely.

The anti-war movement has to step up its response against the Russian invasion, but also firmly against Nato expansion.

NATO LEADERS are getting ready to ramp up warmongering, but it comes at a cost

Stop the War activists debate the next steps for the movement

AROUND 400 people joined an online teach-in on Saturday analysing the roots and consequences of the war in Ukraine. It was organised by the Stop the War Coalition, which opposes the Russian invasion but also calls for no Nato escalation.

The meeting shows there is an audience for those who do not go along with the dominant idea that the only villain is Vladimir Putin. Or that Nato is some sort of humanitarian body.

Vijay Prashad, director of Transcontinental—Institute of Social Research, said war was always terrible. But he said that the way that Ukraine was reported showed that "some people are seen as more human than others".

He demanded, "Where was the moral outrage when Russia was destroying Chechnya? There is the outrage at British arms suppliers making money from pulverising Yemen?"

Prashad added that Nato is "Washington's instrument, a trojan horse for US power".

Out on the streets

He said it was a method of subordinating Europe to the US and pushing members into wars in Asia, the Middle East and the rivalry with China.

Chris Nineham, the vice chair of the Stop The War Coalition, challenged the idea that it was a battle between "Western civilisation and Russian degeneracy". He said the anti-war movement in Britain had

been on the streets and would "need to do it again".

Socialist Worker editor Charlie Kimber, speaking in the discussion, said that Nato should be abolished. He said, "whatever happens in the immediate future it will only freeze the situation before another outburst of war that flows from imperialist rivalries".

And Russian activist Asya Maruket said those opposing the war had to use "creative ways to express their voice" because of repression.

Several contributors said it was important to combine agitation against the war with action over the cost of living crisis.

It was disappointing that elements of the left who oppose any criticism of Nato did not attend to argue their position.

And there were no high-profile Labour Party or trade union figures present.

Their compliance and silence make it easier for Boris Johnson to peddle his fake national unity.

Sabotage and protests win important battles

PROTESTERS IN a major Ukrainian town forced Russian soldiers to release the mayor and leave on Saturday of last week.

Large numbers of people marched in the centre of Slavutyh, which is under Russian occupation, and defied intimidation by Russian soldiers.

The soldiers tried to break up the march by firing guns and stun grenades over the heads of the marchers. But demonstrators stood firm and chanted back in response.

After the march Russian soldiers agreed to release mayor Yuri Formichev.

He then told protesters Russian soldiers agreed to leave if there was no Ukrainian military in the city.

Railways

It comes after rail workers in Belarus sabotaged railways to stop supplies reaching the Russian army in Ukraine. A significant proportion of Russian

military supplies have been brought into Ukraine via Belarus, which is allied to Russia, since the war began.

But action by workers has reportedly cut rail links between Ukraine and Belarus by damaging signalling equipment.

The action echoes the words of the Belarusian Congress of Trade Unions, which issued a statement against the Russian invasion at the start of the war. "We

onto buses to camps in Russia and Russian-held territory.

Irina, a Mariupol refugee and Red Cross volunteer, told the BBC she and others sheltering in a bunker had been instructed to leave by Russian soldiers for their own safety.

Checkpoint She said they walked three miles to a Russian checkpoint.

From there they were taken to the Donetsk People's Republic breakaway

region. "Some elderly people that I know and whom I met at the distribution point did not know where they were headed and what for," she said. "They thought they would be able to stay in Rostov, Russia for a couple of months and then maybe come back to Mariupol."

"Instead, they were taken north to Samara. They said they had no idea what to do there, and the accommodation there is provided only for two weeks."

Big London demonstration

TENS OF thousands of people marched on a pro-Ukrainian demonstration on Saturday in London that was called by the mayor Sadiq Khan.

The demonstration said it was to "stand with Ukraine" against the invasion and support refugees. But it was essentially a

pro-Nato march. People marched with placards calling for a no-fly zone—which would mean war between Nato and Russia.

There were huge cheers for a video speech by Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky, who has called for Nato

military intervention. And Ukraine's ambassador to Britain Vadym Prystaiko said there could be no "appeasement of Russia" and "no longer shades or nuances".

The message was that support for Ukraine must also mean support for Nato.

Socialist Worker
WHAT WE THINK

JOHNSON LIES—OVER PARTYGATE AND UKRAINE

WHAT'S THE link between the war in Ukraine and the "partygate scandal that saw some fixed penalty fines handed out—last—on Monday?

The connection is the politics and attitude of the man in 10 Downing Street.

The same contempt for the lives of ordinary people lies behind the reckless drive to escalate Nato action in Ukraine and the handling of the pandemic.

It wasn't just that Johnson's chums partied while people died, and the rest of us were prosecuted if we broke the Tories' rules.

It was a continuation of when he said, "No more fucking lockdowns—let the bodies pile high in their thousands."

That vile declaration was a deliberate, conscious decision to send more people to their deaths and to put profits before ordinary people's health.

The same disregard for life is happening in Ukraine. Johnson is not interested in the lives of ordinary Ukrainians.

Along with US president Joe Biden and the other Nato leaders,

his aim is to entrench and extend Western power across the world.

His motto could be, "No more fucking retreats, let Ukrainian and Russian bodies pile high in their thousands".

And then there are countless more corpses he risks by pushing measures that could unleash nuclear war.

Johnson hopes that the war will enable him to escape from the scandals that nearly finished him off just months ago. And it was unclear as we went to press whether he will receive a richly-deserved fine.

He ought to be driven out. Even the Met police, which tried to protect the Tories, has been

Johnson hopes that war in Ukraine will let him escape from Covid scandals

members to "stay and fight" in the party—and by appealing to the right for "unity".

And as before, that appeal for unity will shut down any hope of a fight.

When the right suspended former leader Jeremy Corbyn from the party, left MPs refused to rebel so that they could stay in Labour.

They did the same when four more left groups were banned from Labour last year.

And when left MPs came under

forced to conclude that Johnson's Downing Street operation is guilty of breaking the law.

They broke their own Covid rules at the heart of government.

But of course Tory backbenchers, and Labour's Keir Starmer, won't really push for him to go at a time when they are peddling "national unity".

Johnson lied about what happened at the parties, and he has lied about Ukraine. The same man who is strangling workers' pay and benefits to protect bosses' profits is the same one who backs a wider war.

Pandemics, war and climate change aren't anomalies in an otherwise well-rounded society. They are the products of a toxic system that works for those at the top and leaves the rest of us to pick up the pieces.

That's why we need more resistance to the war and all the attacks on the working class.

The brutal P&O sackings ought to be a turning point, a moment when workers and the trade union movement should unite in militant revolt.

As prices and taxes surge, there needs to be many more protests, strikes and occupations.

LEFT NOT WELCOME IN LABOUR

THREE LEFT groups were set to be banned from the Labour Party as Socialist Worker went to press.

The party's governing body, the National Executive Committee, was likely to agree that supporting any of those groups should get you banned from membership.

It shows the space for left wing politics in Labour is shrinking ever further.

As before, Labour left MPs and groups will respond by telling

members to "stay and fight" in the party—and by appealing to the right for "unity".

And as before, that appeal for unity will shut down any hope of a fight.

When the right suspended former leader Jeremy Corbyn from the party, left MPs refused to rebel so that they could stay in Labour.

They did the same when four more left groups were banned from Labour last year.

And when left MPs came under

attack for signing a Stop the War Coalition statement earlier in March, every single one of them backed down.

If they won't stand up for themselves, don't expect them to stand up for you.

If you want to keep fighting, the best place to do that is outside Labour.

You can be free to support Stop the War and striking workers, and be as left wing as you like—without the threat of "unity" with the right.

Breakfast in

RED

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For updates and analysis on the stories that matter go to socialistworker.co.uk/breakfastinred

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Our new website brings together stories of struggles the mainstream won't report. It helps you find socialist meetings, protests and strikes—and the Marxist ideas and activism to change the world.

ANALYSIS

MARK O'BRIEN



Socialists can build anti-war movement

FORTY YEARS ago this week Argentinian troops landed on the British colony of the Falkland Islands. It triggered a conflict that was used by prime minister Margaret Thatcher to boost Britain's moth-eaten imperial credentials.

Crucially, Thatcher's gamble to send a huge force of ships, planes and soldiers 8,000 miles to the South Atlantic won backing from Labour leader Michael Foot.

Foot, who styled himself an "inveterate peacemonger", tore into the Tories for being slow to defend the Falklands and demanded "deeds not words" in response.

Key figures in the trade union movement supported the war from the start, and the biggest anti-war demonstration saw only 7,000 people march.

Even the shocking sinking of the Argentinean ship HMS Belgrano with the loss of 323 lives did not dent the war's popularity. The media and the whole British establishment celebrated it as a victory.

Yet today the war is very widely regarded as a horrendous, wasteful manoeuvre where hundreds of people were killed to help the Tories grab votes.

Today, Labour leader Keir Starmer attacks the Stop the War Coalition and attempts to outdo Boris Johnson in his pro-Nato escalation rhetoric.

He's part of a long Labour tradition. In the case of the 2003 Iraq War, Labour MPs only voted against war in any numbers after the anti-war movement had grown to gigantic proportions.

At the beginning of a war there is often a powerful tide of popular patriotic emotion that can make rational discussion difficult.

In its earliest phase a war can even create a sense of national adventure and help for victims of the fighting. Some people rush to help with humanitarian aid or to open their homes to refugees.

In that atmosphere, the anti-war camp, in the earliest stage of a war, is often in a minority. The first anti-Vietnam war protests in the US from 1963 onwards were attended by hundreds, rather than thousands.

It was also true at the beginning of the First World War. In September 1915, what was left of the anti-war socialist movement in Europe met at a conference in Zimmerwald, Switzerland.

Revolutionary Leon Trotsky remarked that the entire anti-war socialist movement had travelled to the conference in just four coaches.

And yet these early first actions, small though they are, can become the seeds of much greater movements.

As the resources of the state are given over increasingly to fighting its war, working class people are called upon to make sacrifices, while the rich continue with their luxury lifestyles.

Increasingly also the original rationale for a war wears thin as the true imperialist ambitions are exposed. The "moral ascendancy" over the enemy is exposed as the lie it always was.

Measured

In the case of the US anti-Vietnam War movement, by 1967 anti-war protests were measured in the tens of thousands.

On 21 October of that year, the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam (Mobe) organised a protest of 100,000. Some 50,000 marched on the Pentagon later that day.

By 1969, university campuses across the US had erupted with anti-war sit-ins and protests, and on 15 November Mobe's March Against Death was half a million strong.

The movement against the Iraq War would eventually lead to the largest protest ever, held on 15 February 2003, with up to two million people marching in Britain.

The First World War would culminate in revolutionary movements across Europe, and the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Wars are often launched with a wave of popular backing, and as socialists we are tested by war.

But we can take heart from the fact that from quite small beginnings, the anti-war movement can grow rapidly. And it can become great enough to challenge the logic of war itself, alongside the establishment that creates it.



THE GOVERNMENT is ensuring more deaths by forcing people to pay for tests

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

Tories promise Covid surge by ending free test programme

by YURI PRASAD

CAN THE government's Covid strategy be any more reckless than it already is? For hundreds of thousands of health workers, the likely answer is "yes".

Infections and hospitalisations across Britain have recently soared to peaks not seen since the height of the pandemic.

Yet this week the department of health will axe free testing kits for the vast majority of people.

Even those on the medical front lines could be forced to buy their own Covid tests on the open market.

The news came just before the Office for National Statistics announced last week that Covid cases in Britain have rocketed by around a million in seven days.

Soared

The number of infections soared to 4.26 million in the seven days to 19 March.

That's up 30 percent on the week before and just short of the 4.3 million in the first week of 2022, which was the highest since estimates began.

Scotland is in the grip of its biggest surge to date, with one in 11 people infected over the seven-day period.

In England and Wales, one in 16 people were infected, Yet the employers' NHS

Confederation this week admitted that health workers may be forced to pay about £50 a month for tests out of their meagre salaries.

Staff absences in NHS hospitals in England due to Covid this week jumped by more than 30 percent—the biggest increase since the start of the year.

The Royal College of Nursing's director for England, Patricia Marquis, said the new figures showed that the pressure on nursing staff in every region was worsening.

"Cases are rising and more

Tests should be free for all

Inquiry shows health errors

AN independent inquiry into Essex NHS mental health services has found that at least 1,500 patients died within their care or shortly after discharge.

The shocking report looked at unexplained and unexpected deaths of patients over a 21-year period.

The cases involve highly vulnerable children, young people and adults.

Dr Geraldine Strathdee, who is leading the inquiry, said some of the evidence included "unacceptable examples of behaviours

that families believe contributed to the death of their loved ones".

In her initial findings Strathdee found serious concerns about patients' physical, mental and sexual safety while on a ward. She also reported evidence of big differences in the quality of care patients received—in both safe attitudes and the use of effective treatments.

Inquest, the campaigning charity that investigates deaths in residential mental health care, said the deaths amounted to "a national scandal".

uncertainty looms with free community testing set to end this month," she said. "Employers must ensure nursing staff have continued access to testing and high quality protective PPE equipment."

And it's not just healthcare that's taking a hit.

The number of pupils in state schools in England that were absent due to Covid last week has more than tripled in a fortnight.

Jump

Figures from the Department of Education last week showed 202,000 pupils in England were off school on 17 March because of the virus.

That's a massive jump from the 58,000 figure recorded two weeks earlier.

But the worst is yet to come. When free testing ends for all but the most vulnerable this week we will have little or no idea of how many people are infected.

People with minor symptoms will be expected to work where they could infect others that are far more susceptible to serious illness.

The only figures we will be able to count on are the numbers in hospital and the numbers that have died.

But for health secretary Sajid Javid it's all going swimmingly. Responding to the new wave of infections, he said there's "no particular cause for concern".

Students vow to keep fighting police searches

by ISABEL RINGROSE

STUDENTS AT City and Islington College in north London are still pressuring college bosses to end stop and search measures after an impressive walkout last week.

The measures have reportedly been suspended while talks between management and the student union are planned.

One month ago students arriving at the college were forced through an invasive search by male private security guards.

Management didn't announce the new measures to the sixth form students, their parents or college staff.

The students were made to queue, and every tenth—selected via a buzzer system—was patted down and had their bags thoroughly checked.

Hundreds of students joined a protest last week that called on management to end the “terrible” measures.

They were inspired by demonstrators in the neighbouring borough of Hackney after it was revealed that police strip searched a 15 year old black girl, known as Child Q, in her school.

Students plan to continue lobbying college management to suspend and ultimately end the stop and search measures.

A meeting with management and student union reps is planned for after the Easter holidays.

But students have told Socialist Worker that despite some communication from college bosses, they want to keep up the pressure to make sure they're heard.

Larger

There are talks of larger protests being planned to ramp up the campaign.

Following last week's student action, the Islington branch of the NEU education union said staff had also protested against the measures.

“We are appalled that the college has gone ahead with the stop and search despite our members’—and students’—deep opposition to it,” it said.

It added that instead of students being “a threat” to people's safety, “many of the college's students are very vulnerable.”

And students who speak English as a second language, in particular did not understand why they were being searched via systematic checks.

“The students were not given the opportunity to withdraw from the search, so don't seem to have given consent,” the NEU said.

“There also does not seem to be reasonable grounds for suspecting that these learners were in possession

of prohibited items.

“Staff were horrified to find out that a Ukrainian refugee arrived at the college to be greeted with stop and search.

“Another cause of anxiety is that students are being led to separate areas to be searched.”

In the wake of the outrage over the strip searching of Child Q, Tory education secretary Nadhim Zahawi said he was looking at “putting out much tougher guidelines”.

Currently schools are not required to tell parents about any such search, and only police can carry out intimate searches.

But the solution isn't tougher guidelines—it's an end to all stop and search measures that look to criminalise children in schools.

The students at City and Islington College show the right way to resist the invasive measures by standing up and fighting back.

Tories leave refugees vulnerable

ALMOST FOUR million refugees have fled Ukraine, and some 6.5 million are displaced within the country.

People traffickers reportedly stalk the Ukrainian borders attempting to lure women into the sex trade or slave labour.

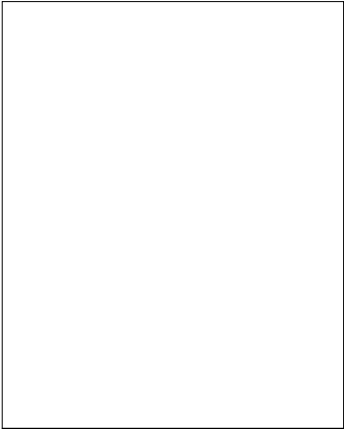
And in Britain, the Tories' scheme for housing refugees is raising concerns.

Britain's family visa scheme has seen just 12,000 visas issued.

The Homes for Ukraine scheme allows refugees to stay with individuals or families, who are given £350 a month for up to six months.

But two weeks on, no visas have been granted, giving those applying “false hope”.

And there are huge concerns that slum landlords and sex traffickers could pose as hosts



Protesters against racism

and offer women and children rooms.

The answer is state-run schemes to house all refugees in long term homes. Spare rooms, short term accommodation and hotel rooms are not genuine solutions.

Ukrainians also made up the largest proportion of workers on seasonal visas in 2021.

They are often exploited and forced into horrific working conditions.

As the number of those in distress calling British and French border forces for help increases, so does the possibility of more deaths at sea.

French refugee solidarity group Utopia 56, said, “While the number of deaths at the French border continues to increase, the state continues its policy of harassment, pushing more and more people to leave the territory every day.”

As crises around the world unfold, it's no wonder thousands risk their lives to flee to safety in Britain.

But Tory hypocrisy here is rife. They demonise those crossing and fail to provide the “legal” routes they claim exist.

Overseas workers trapped

HEALTH WORKERS recruited from overseas to work for the NHS and care homes are being trapped in their jobs by the prospect of huge fines.

In some cases, nurses are tied to their jobs for up to five years and face fees of as much as £14,000 if they want to change jobs or return home early.

A report in the Observer newspaper said employers and agencies are using contracts designed to recoup “recruitment costs”—including those relating to flights and visas.

One contract used in an NHS hospital trust in the east

of England says international nurses must repay unspecified “costs related to (their) recruitment” if they leave within three years.

Those leaving within 18 months must repay “100 percent” of the costs.

Implements Health bosses are able to act in this way because they know they have the support of a government that implements a “hostile environment.”

Unions in the NHS must show them that health workers can fight back for all their colleagues.



Hunger and resistance over rising cost of food

There have been protests and riots over price increases in Sudan and Sri Lanka, reports **Sophie Squire**

WAR IN Ukraine is sending shockwaves in a global food market already hit hard by failed harvests, climate change and speculation.

But hunger is also leading to revolt.

Russia and Ukraine account for around 30 percent of the world's wheat exports. But sanctions on Russia and blockades of Ukrainian ports have cut off the distribution of wheat.

Speculators are driving prices higher. Seeing shortages they hoard and restrict food for profit.

Many of the countries that rely on the region for wheat and other grains have already been torn apart by war, imperialism and climate change.

Somalia in east Africa depends on Russia and Ukraine for 100 percent of its wheat exports, and Yemen imports over 60 percent.

Recently United Nations officials said 19 million people in Yemen are projected to be in need of food assistance. Of these, 7.3 million people face emergency levels of hunger and 161,000 actual starvation.

This is the legacy of the Western-driven war headed by Saudi Arabia and using British armaments.

About 75 percent of Sudan's wheat comes from Ukraine and Russia. Now, with prices rising on a wide range of commodities, protesters are taking to the streets.

Raged

Thousands took part in big demonstrations on Thursday of last week. They raged against the rising price of essentials, especially fuel. They drew on the anger and continued democracy demands after a military coup in October last year.

The grassroots Resistance Committees, which have been central to the fightback against the generals' regime, called for barricades to block the streets. Security forces killed one protester and injured others in Wad Madani city and the capital Khartoum.

According to the UN, the number

BACK STORY

War in Ukraine is shattering food supply chains and being used to drive up prices

● In Lebanon since the start of March, flour has disappeared from the shops and the price of bread has increased by 70 percent

● Egypt relies on Russia and Ukraine for more than 80 percent of its wheat purchased on international markets. Its subsidised bread programme, which feeds 70 million people, is under severe strain

of extremely hungry people in Sudan could double by September. The price of bread has risen from 30 Sudanese pounds to 50 in just a matter of months.

Farmer and father of six, Hussien Khair el-Said, told the Guardian newspaper, "People are really struggling here."

Shortages of food and fuel also led to large protests in Sri Lanka last week. The cost of items such as milk powder and chicken has risen tenfold.

Protester Sanjeeva Perera said, "There is a massive economic crisis. The people don't have food, fuel, and even if we have money, we can't buy what we want. The rulers don't care that people are suffering."

Prasad Colombage, another protester, added, "People just eat one meal a day."

Protests against food prices rising are terrifying to those in power. A new United Nations report on the impact of the war in Ukraine warned that "The risk of civil unrest, food shortages and inflation-induced recessions cannot be discounted."

Riots, strikes and revolutions would be a welcome response to war and hunger.



On other pages...

Rishi Sunak fails to address cost of living crisis >>> **Page 17**

PROTESTERS RETURNED to the streets of Khartoum last Thursday

INDIA

Strike shows mood for workers' action

UP TO 200 million people joined a two-day strike in India this week against the hard right government of Narendra Modi.

The All India Trade Union Congress, one of the largest union groupings in the country said it was expecting a shutdown involving both formal and informal workers.

Modi and his thuggish ministers are trying to ram through privatisation and restart attacks on the poor that were derailed by the recent victory of protesting farmers.

By Monday morning reports said that much of the banking industry had shut up shop.

Groups of workers were blocking railway lines to stop the few trains that remained running.

But despite the wide support, the strike is only the second significant union-organised national action since Modi's 2019 re-election.

During the farmers' battle that raged during that time the unions largely stayed out of the battle. And there is a strong danger that the strike will remain a one-off showpiece designed for the period of state-wide elections.

But reports from the strike show there is a thirst for action among many workers.

Strikers block a train in Bengal

World leaders ignore Myanmar war crimes

DEMOCRACY ACTIVISTS in Myanmar fighting the military dictatorship must be wondering what they have to do to capture the attention of the world's media.

Regime general Min Aung Hlaing this week used a speech to boast that he plans to "annihilate" the country's radical opposition.

He is already waging war on overwhelmingly young rebels in the main towns and cities, and against ethnic groups seeking freedom in the countryside.

An outline of Hlaing's plans can be seen in the western province

of Magway. The Myanmar Now website reports resident Tin Tun mourns his wife and three year old daughter, and eight other members of his family killed by government troops.

Regime soldiers captured Tun's village, rounded up civilians and then began shelling the area in a bid to ward off resistance fighters.

They then looted everyone's property. In a battle that followed most of the captured civilians were killed. Some of their burnt bodies were dumped next to their houses.

What happened to Tun's family

is being repeated across the country—and will likely now be stepped up after Hlaing's speech.

Nevertheless, the Asean group of south east Asian nations seems to be moving to an accommodation with the regime.

Cambodia, widely seen as a conduit for China, is proposing to bring Myanmar back into the Asean fold with talks with all the country's "stakeholders".

The move is part of an attempt to stop the democracy and ethnic insurgency spreading "instability" across the region.

Anti-racism does need organising

FORMER BLACK Panther Party leader Elaine Brown is right to say that little organisation came from the Black Lives Matter movement (Socialist Worker, 23 March).

But that doesn't mean that nothing came out of the movement.

In fact, we see the ideological impact of Black Lives Matter rolling out all the time.

People's understanding of the racist nature of the state is far greater now than before 2020's protests.

That can be seen in the wave of anger at police harassment and stripping of Child Q in east London last week.

The protests outside the police station and the town hall easily embraced the idea of abolishing the Metropolitan Police. Once that demand would have been seen as "too radical".

Around the same time, students at nearby City and Islington college staged an inspiring walk-out over a newly introduced stop and search policy in their college.

Students immediately sensed it would be used in a racist way and had the confidence to take action.

These examples show that Black Lives Matter both radicalised people and produced a whole new layer of young activists.

The task now is to try and win new forces to the idea of building something radical and more permanent—and in that battle we can draw inspiration from Elaine Brown and the Black Panthers.

Nadia Sayed
East London



A family disunited because of Tory hatred of refugees

THERE IS a little cafe near where I live in Leeds which is run by a couple—a woman from Ukraine and a man from Italy.

At the beginning of March the woman's sister managed to escape the war and get out of Ukraine.

Her partner drove all the way from south Leeds to Plock, in Poland, to pick up his sister in law and his young nephew.

He had intended to bring them back to Britain to Britain with him.

On the return journey they got as far as the French side of the Channel but immigration control there refused to allow them to cross.

They said this was because the child does not have a passport.

The family were not even allowed

to speak to UK Border Control officials to explain the situation.

So, they had no alternative to drive thousands more miles across France to Italy so that the mother and child could be cared for by other members of the family.

This cruelty has shocked our local community many of whom followed their journey—of around 4,000 miles—over four days via Facebook.

Councillors and MPs were contacted to see if they could help. But so far the sister and her child are still not allowed to join their family in Britain.

A few weeks a Palestinian refugee friend asked me if, as a result of the war in Ukraine, people in Britain now under something of what it is

like to be refugee. I said, "I hope so".

I talked about the overwhelming support for Ukrainian refugees there is here, and the thousands of people registering to host families in their homes.

That sympathy comes despite the BBC insisting on calling all those trying to cross the Channel in dinghies as "migrants" rather than the refugees seeking sanctuary that they are.

We socialists should use the wave of public sympathy to argue that all refugees are welcome here.

And, we should always point out the hypocrisy of our Tory government.

Sally Kincaid
Leeds

We need working class sanctions against P&O

LISTENING TO the disgusting Tory hypocrisy on the sacked P&O workers is enough to make me sick.

I was a seafarer for 25 years and can assure readers that when workers take action they can win. But it's no use the union running to the courts when they are fighting one of the world's most powerful corporations.

Instead, we have to hit them where it hurts—in the profits. We need working class sanctions on P&O.

A ship filled with cargo

and cars is a massive store of wealth that we have to take control of.

That means picketing the big docks with hundreds of seafarers, and seeking to stop the work. I've heard the leaders of the RMT union talking big, but you are what you do.

In order to stop sacked workers from taking the P&O redundancy settlement, the RMT has to show it is serious about the fight.

John Tipple
Harwich

Vietnam lessons to stop war in Ukraine

MILLIONS OF people want to see a quick end to the war in Ukraine.

One reason for supporting Western interventions, such as no-fly zones, is that many people cannot see an alternative.

Socialists have to point out that there is no quick answer that does not risk escalation, and a possible nuclear conflict.

We must also point to concrete examples from history when mass movements stopped imperialist war.

We should remember the Vietnam War, which ended when multiple revolts made it impossible for the United States to continue the fight.

The most important of these was by the Vietnamese people that inflicted casualties on the US on a scale that brought the war home to America.

The second revolt was in the US itself where growing numbers of anti-war activists protested against the war.

And, the revolt of the US troops themselves that

increasingly refused to fight made up the last piece of the jigsaw puzzle of resistance.

That's how the anti-war movement eventually stopped the Vietnam War.

Martin Empson
Manchester

Just a thought...

Wrong to stop and search

THE STOP and search policy at City and Islington college sounds heavy handed (Socialist Worker, 23 March).

What is the point of a search which only applies to some?

Patting down? Have these security checkers been vetted? And even if they have, the revelations on the Met police show great caution is needed.

The students are right to object.

Valerie
on Facebook

Not so radical, I'm afraid

THE Countess Constance Markievicz (Socialist Worker, 23 March) turned out to be a liberal and went squealing to the government to smash the Waterford soviet.

People might be suffragettes but which side are they on liberal or socialist?

Sean
On Facebook

We've all got our oligarchs

THE MAINSTREAM press is filled with talk of Russian "oligarchs".

Why do none of them want to talk about British oligarchs too?

Ours made their money by ripping off the workers, just the same as those from the former Soviet Union.

So let's call all our bosses by their real name—oligarch scum.

Name withheld
by email

Don't want to go to Chelsea

I'VE DISLIKED Chelsea football club since the days of the 1980s when its Tory-Boy chairman proposed putting fans behind an electric fence to stop pitch invasions.

And, I disliked them more after their "legendary" team captain, John Terry, racially abused QPR's Anton Ferdinand.

But even I don't want to see the club effectively wound-up by the government as a result of sanctions on Russia.

The real task is to liberate all clubs from their not "fit and proper" owners

C Hatton
West London

THE GREAT POWER GRAB

IMPERIALISM AND THE WAR IN UKRAINE BY ALEX CALLINICOS

THE MAINSTREAM media present the war in Ukraine as a struggle between “democracy”, represented by Ukraine and its Western backers, and “authoritarianism” in the shape of Vladimir Putin’s regime in Russia. But this is much too simplistic.

For example, probably Ukraine’s most enthusiastic backer is the far right government in Poland, which is under investigation by the European Union for its authoritarian tendencies.

Putin is supported by India, which, despite its own brutish fascist government, remains a multi-party democracy.

The mainstream way of framing the conflict is designed to equate the Western bloc of liberal capitalist states with the “international community”.

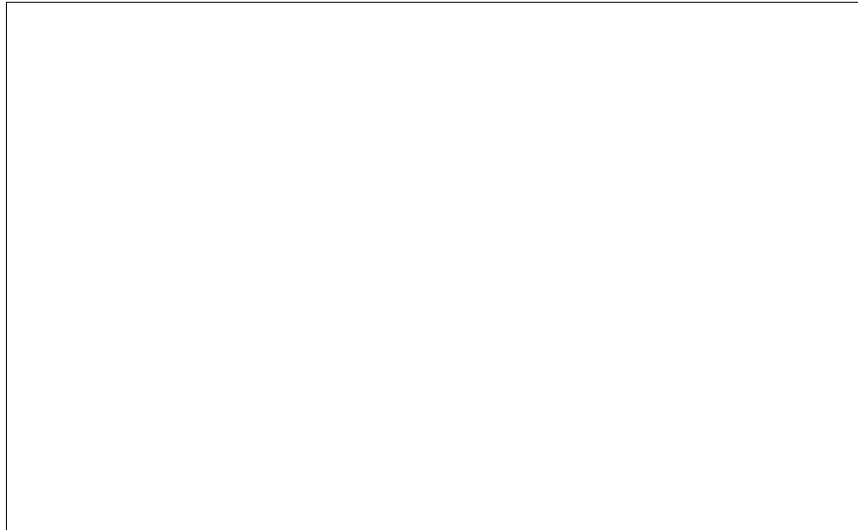
It is also a way of denying legitimacy to the interests of this bloc’s rivals because they are “authoritarian.” This gets forgotten however when it comes to, for example, the murderous Saudi autocracy.

So are there better theoretical frameworks for understanding the conflict?

One resource is provided by the idea of imperialism. After all, Putin seems intent on restoring the old Tsarist Empire that was destroyed by the Russian Revolution of October 1917.

But it’s important to clear about what we mean by imperialism. We can understand it as a phenomenon that spans historical eras, as the way in which powerful states dominate, conquer, and exploit neighbouring societies.

This has been a feature of class societies for thousands of years, going



back to the ancient Persian, Chinese, and Roman empires.

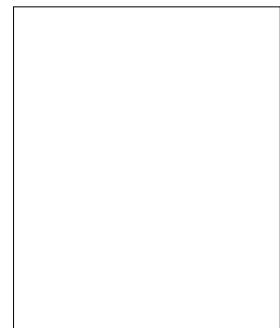
Now Russia is clearly behaving like an imperialist power in this sense, seeking to batter the Ukrainian state into submission and carve up its territory.



If Russia were defeated would the US and its allies react by dissolving Nato? Of course not

The Ukrainian city of Mariupol is being destroyed by Russian bombs (left) while Nato is flooding the country with arms—including shoulder launched missiles (right)

Alex Callinicos (below) argues that imperialism is best understood as a system of rivalries rather than simply big power bullying



spending in Nato countries, which has already gotten off to a flying start, while a Russian defeat would offer much better conditions for our battle for general disarmament and the dissolution of Nato.”

It would indeed be good if the Ukrainian people were able to drive out the Russian invaders.

But there is a small problem with Achcar’s argument that this would weaken the US and Nato. They are enthusiastically backing the Ukrainians, flooding them with arms, and boosting their own military budgets.

If, thanks to these efforts and the courage of the Ukrainian fighters, Russia were defeated, would the US and its allies react by disarming and dissolving Nato? Of course they wouldn’t.

They would celebrate this outcome as their victory, and boost Nato further. The US would feel invigorated in its world-historic competition with the real challenger to its hegemony, China.

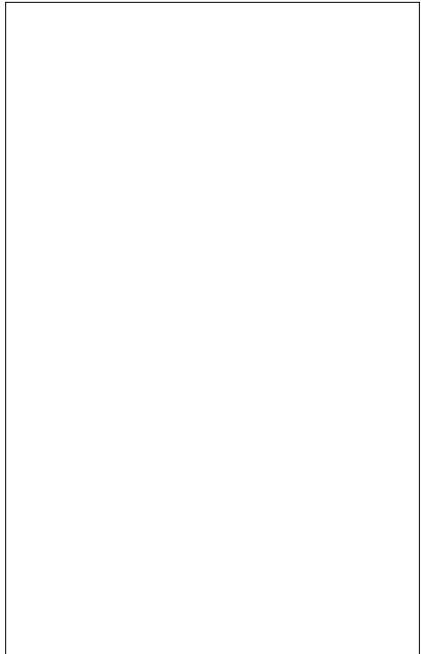
Confronted

What is missing from Achcar’s approach, and that of other leftists that duck the issue of Nato such as Paul Mason, is the more historically specific understanding of imperialism offered by Marxism.

We can see this theory emerging originally in Karl Marx’s Capital in the 1860s. But it is developed more systematically in the early 20th century, around the time of the First World War.

Marxists were confronted with a reality similar to our own. The radical liberal economist JA Hobson wrote, “The novelty of recent Imperialism ... consists chiefly in its adoption by several nations. The notion of a number of competing empires is essentially modern.”

This geopolitical competition was



expressed in conflicts over territory—the colonies and semi-colonies that the biggest states were striving to dominate—and in an accelerating arms race.

The Marxist theory of imperialism was developed to explain these rivalries, which precipitated the two world wars of 1914-18 and 1939-45, drowning the world in blood.

It was a theory of capitalist imperialism. The Russian revolutionary Vladimir Lenin called imperialism the highest stage of capitalism.

His Polish-German comrade Rosa Luxemburg wrote, “The essence of imperialism consists precisely in the expansion of capital from the old capitalist

countries into new regions and the competitive economic and political struggle among those for those new areas.”

To put it another way, capitalist imperialism represents the intersection of economic and geopolitical competition.

Economic competition is the driving force of capitalism—rival firms struggle against each other, investing in improved and expanded production to seize a larger share of markets.

In the late 19th century, the geopolitical struggle among states was subsumed under the capitalist logic of competitive accumulation.

This reflected changes in both warfare and capitalism.

War was industrialised, as military power came to depend on mass production to arm, support, and transport huge armies. States therefore needed to promote industrial capitalism.

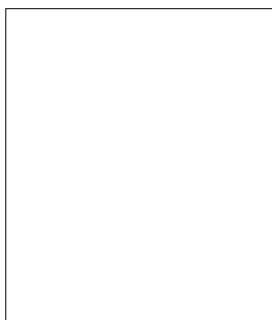
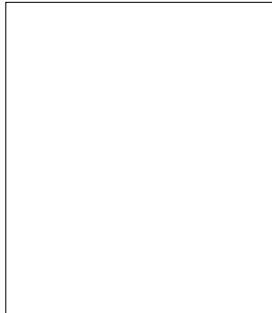
Meanwhile capitalist firms increased in size and started to operate globally. They depended on state support against their rivals.

During the depression of the late 19th century, seizing overseas colonies compensated for falling profitability.

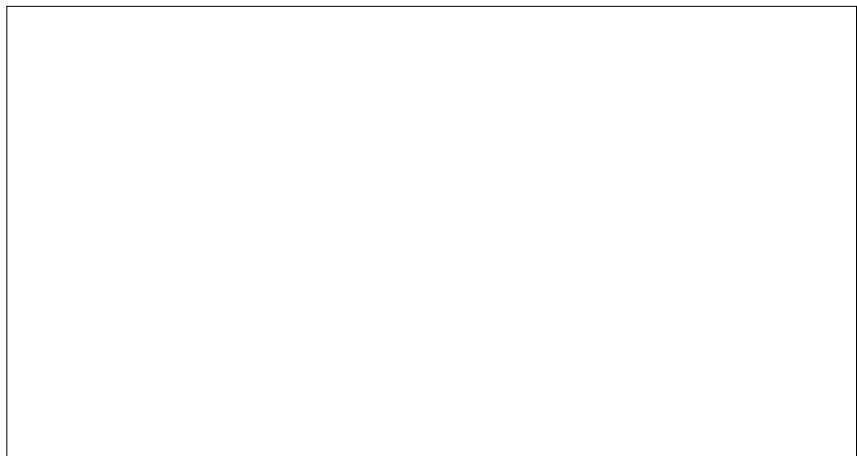
So capitalist imperialism isn’t just big states bullying and conquering smaller states—though there is plenty of that. It’s a global system of inter-capitalist competition.

Just as before the First World War, today imperialism means geopolitical competition against the background of global economic integration.

The power of the antagonists depends on their position in the capitalist world economy. The US dominates finance and big tech, China has a vast manufacturing machine, and Russia relies on energy exports.



Presidents Putin and Biden both want territorial expansion of their empires—but Russia starts from a far weaker position in the global pecking order



Marxists had to understand the apparently senseless slaughter of the First World War

TODAY ONE can identify perhaps six leading imperialist powers—the US, China, Russia, Britain, France, and Germany.

The most important antagonism is that between the US and China whose leaders aim to displace Washington’s hegemony, initially in the Indo-Pacific region.

But Russian imperialism, manoeuvring to rebuild its power, creates a three-way conflict.

The big western European powers are pulled in different directions. They depend on Russian energy and are attracted by the vast Chinese market—but, as at present, they ultimately line up with the US.

Now this understanding of capitalist imperialism as involving a system of interstate rivalry is completely missing from Achcar’s analysis.

He denies that the Ukraine war involves a conflict among imperialist powers. “If any war where each side is supported by an imperialist rival were called an inter-imperialist war, then all the wars of our time would be inter-imperialist, since as a rule, it is enough for one of the rival imperialisms to support one side for the other to support the opposite side.

“An inter-imperialist war is not that. It is a direct war, and not one by proxy, between two powers, each of which seeks to invade the territorial and (neo) colonial domain of the other.”

This is much too narrow. The US waged a proxy war against the Soviet Union after the latter tried to seize Afghanistan at the end of 1979.

Along with allies such as Britain, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan it armed and trained the mujahedin fighters who resisted the Soviet occupation.

The conflict helped to drain Soviet resources and morale in the last decade of the Cold War.

Of course, the mujahedin had their own political agendas. This became clear after Soviet forces withdrew in 1989, culminating in the Taliban’s support for al-Qaeda and its resistance to the US



Without the Marxist theory of imperialism we are confronted only by struggle between rival states

occupation following the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington.

But the US played a decisive shaping role in an important final episode of the Cold War.

Of course, there are huge differences between Ukraine today and Afghanistan in the 1980s.

But there is an important similarity, in that the Western imperialist powers are instrumentalising the Ukrainian national struggle against Russian imperialism for their own interests.

Inter-imperialist struggles and wars of national defence often interweave.

The First World War started when the Austro-Hungarian Empire attacked Serbia, which it blamed for the assassination of its crown prince Franz Ferdinand.

Russia then backed Serbia, leading to an escalating process of military mobilisations that ended in a terrible general war.

The German Marxist Karl Kautsky argued that the role played by the Serbian struggle for national self-determination meant the conflict wasn’t just an imperialist war.

Lenin responded, “To Serbia, i.e., to perhaps one percent or so of the participants in the present war, the war is a ‘continuation of the politics’ of the bourgeois-liberation movement.

“To the other ninety-nine percent, the war is a continuation of the politics of imperialism.”

Antagonism

Of course, the balance is different in the present case since the direct fighting involves just Ukraine and Russia.

Nevertheless the Nato powers’ efforts to stay out of the fighting—above all to avoid nuclear confrontation with Russia—don’t alter the fact they are doing everything they can short of this to defeat Russia.

This too is “a continuation of the politics of imperialism”.

The Marxist theory of imperialism is important politically. Without it we are confronted simply with a struggle between rival nation-states.

But once we see the role of imperialism, we can identify the class antagonism at work.

We can see the thread of class interest that binds together not just the Russian conscripts dying in Putin’s war and their families back home being walloped economically by the effects of Western sanctions.

This thread also connects with working people all over the world, hit thanks to the war by food and energy inflation and threatened with nuclear destruction.

It unites them all against the rival ruling classes busy feeding this terrible war.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women.

We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We oppose discrimination against disabled people including those who experience mental distress.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests.

We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to www.swp.org.uk or phone 020 7840 5602

Socialist Workers Party meetings

WAR IN UKRAINE

ABERDEEN

War in Ukraine — is the Marxist theory of imperialism still relevant?

Thu 7 Apr,
7.30pm
885-9187-7552

BIRMINGHAM

War in Ukraine — is the Marxist theory of imperialism still relevant?

Wed 6 Apr,
7pm
The Priory Rooms, Quaker Meeting House, 40 Bull St, B4 6AF
281-634-5938

CARDIFF

War in Ukraine — is the Marxist theory of imperialism still relevant?

Wed 6 Apr,
7.30pm
630-181-4857

CHESTERFIELD

Why Nato is not the answer to Russia's brutal invasion

Thu 7 Apr,
7pm
Assembly Rooms, 13/14 Chesterfield Rd, Chesterfield S40 1AR
828-532-8731

DEVON & CORNWALL

War in Ukraine — is the Marxist theory of imperialism still relevant?

Thu 7 Apr,
7.30pm
865-2972-2883

HOME COUNTIES

Why Nato is not the answer to Russia's brutal invasion

Thu 7 Apr,
6.30pm
8341-170-103

KENT

Why Nato is not the answer to Russia's brutal invasion

Thu 7 Apr,
8.15pm
434-623-8064

LEEDS

Why Nato is not the answer to Russia's brutal invasion

Thu 7 Apr,
7pm
The Swarthmore Education Centre, Yorkshire, 2-7 Woodhouse Square, LS3 1AD
881-4770-0676

LONDON: TOWER HAMLETS

Why Nato is not the answer to Russia's brutal invasion

Wed 6 Apr,
7.30pm
Bernie Cameron Community Centre, 32 Merchant St, E3 4LX
818-391-0420

NORWICH

Why Nato is not the answer to Russia's brutal invasion

Wed 6 Apr, 7.30pm
Butterfly Café, 114A King St, NR1 1QE
906-652-5299

WIGAN

Why Nato is not the answer to Russia's brutal invasion

Thu 7 Apr, 7pm
894-2628-7708

YORK & SCARBOROUGH

Why Nato is not the answer to Russia's brutal invasion

Wed 6 Apr, 7.30pm
Quaker Meeting House, Friargate, York, YO1 9RL
827-489-7492



The Socialist Workers Party continues to hold mostly online meetings during the pandemic. This ensures that there can still be collective and safe discussion, organising and actions. Occasionally branches will hold in-person meetings with precautions taken for a safe environment.

Most of the meetings will be held using the Zoom system. Download the Zoom app onto your phone or computer and just before the time given for your local meeting ask to "Join a meeting".

You can then enter the number printed on this page for the appropriate meeting. **The password for all meetings is 967537.**

Make sure you look at the SWP Facebook page facebook.com/SocialistWorkersParty for news of national online meetings and other updates.

BRIGHTON & HOVE

Tear down the borders — why we oppose all immigration controls

Thu 7 Apr,
6.30pm
818-9286-5617

CAMBRIDGE

What does the Russian Revolution teach us about national freedom?

Thu 7 Apr,
7.30pm
681-800-4408

EAST MIDLANDS

Workers' power — the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Saltley Gate

Wed 6 Apr,
7pm
354-874-4790

EDINBURGH

Inflation and the cost of living crisis — why are prices rising?

Wed 6 Apr, 7.30pm
Friends Meeting House, Edinburgh 7 Victoria Terrace, above, Victoria St, Edinburgh EH1 2JL
431-459-112

GLASGOW

A rebel's guide to Walter Rodney

Thu 7 Apr,
7pm
879-2402-3259

HARLOW

Inflation and the cost of living crisis — why are prices rising?

Thu 7 Apr,
7.30pm
832-8746-7480

HUDDERSFIELD

Inflation and the cost of living crisis — why are prices rising?

Wed 6 Apr,
6.30pm
290-168-1804

LONDON: HACKNEY

War, fossil fuels and the environment

Thu 7 Apr,
7.30pm
Halkevi Community Centre, 31 - 33 Dalston Lane, E8 3DF
854-8245-8715

LONDON: NEWHAM

Violence and direct action — how do we change the world?

Wed 6 Apr, 7pm
288 098 8827

LONDON: SOUTH EAST

Sudan — resistance and revolution

Thu 7 Apr,
7pm
529-913-6390

LONDON: WALTHAM FOREST

Why are the right attacking net zero and how can we build a sustainable economy?

Wed 6 Apr,
7.30pm
543-023-057

LONDON: WEST & NORTH WEST

After child Q — why the police can't be reformed

Thu 7 Apr, 7.30pm
Bay20 Community Centre, 71 St Marks Rd, W10 6JG
892-8966-5179

MANCHESTER

Why are the right attacking net zero, and how can we build a sustainable economy?

Wed 6 Apr, 7pm
323-178-7151

NEWCASTLE

Covid, anti-vaxxers and conspiracies

Wed 6 Apr,
7pm
Tyneside Irish Centre, 43 Gallowgate, NE1 4SG
368-595-2712

NORTH EAST SCOTLAND

Mindshift — how culture transformed the human brain

Wed 6 Apr,
7.30pm
894-2628-7708

OXFORD & THAMES VALLEY

Is Britain becoming a police state?

Wed 6 Apr, 7pm
861-2001-6477

PORTSMOUTH

Covid, anti-vaxxers and conspiracies

Wed 6 Apr, 7.30pm
488-934-2809

SHEFFIELD AND SOUTH YORKSHIRE

The war on trans people

Thu 7 Apr, 7pm
528-174-9278

SOUTHAMPTON

Ending apartheid — how can Palestine be free?

Thu 7 Apr, 7.30pm
381-513-5080

SWANSEA & WEST WALES

Facing starving or freezing — is Martin Lewis right about our bills?

Wed 6 Apr, 7pm
Brynmill Community Centre, St Alban's Rd, SA2 0BP
902-964-963

WOLVERHAMPTON AND WALSALL

Why are the right attacking net zero and how can we build a sustainable economy?

Wed 6 Apr, 7.30pm
914-9548-1031

BOOKMARKS the socialist bookshop



The Labour Party — a Marxist History

by Tony Cliff, Donny Gluckstein and Charlie Kimber, £14.99



Breaking Up the British State — Scotland, Independence and Socialism £12



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by Esme Choonara, Ken Olende, Yuri Prasad and Weyman Bennett, £3



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How the Maxwells became embedded in the British elite

This documentary claims new insights into the life of Robert Maxwell and his daughter Ghislaine. It's a view inside an odious family, writes **Simon Basketter**

ROBERT MAXWELL'S luxury yacht was named after his favourite daughter—the Lady Ghislaine.

He would rob his banks and the Daily Mirror newspaper pension fund of £763 million before falling or jumping or being pushed off the yacht. Three decades on, she was convicted of sex trafficking with the child abuser Jeffrey Epstein.

This three part documentary series claims unseen footage filmed by staff on his boat, recordings of phones he bugged, and material from a survivor of Jeffery Epstein's crimes.

It starts by following the life of the bully and thief who was head of the dynasty.

Maxwell's story seems like fiction, partially because he repeatedly invented parts of his life.

He was born into an impoverished Jewish family in Czechoslovakia. Most of them were murdered by the Nazis.

He made his initial money being paid both by Russian and British intelligence.

They helped him set up a publishing house, and he clawed his way into the British establishment. He lived in a mansion he rented in Oxfordshire and became a Labour MP.

Urinate

He used to stand on a roof's edge and urinate onto passers-by below before climbing into his helicopter.

When he failed to buy the News of the World newspaper he set himself up against that other stereotype of a media baron, Rupert Murdoch.

In 1984, Maxwell bought Mirror Group Newspapers. He was hardly out of the headlines after that.

"Starving children were saved yesterday thanks to the intervention of Mirror publisher, Robert Maxwell," was the type of line that Alastair Campbell, then at the Mirror, wrote.

As the huge theft and bad bets closed in, one taped exchange between executives put it, "I'm fucked if I know what he's done."

"He's gone away on his boat. I'm still trying to track this bloody money down."

When he drowned his empire collapsed. His daughter went from flattering the wealthy and powerful on behalf of her father's business to doing it for Epstein.

The series is short on context and explanation—especially on the amount of stealing from workers.

But the first episode is a useful enough reminder of quite what an odious bastard Captain Bob was.

The House of Maxwell, Mon 4 April, 9pm, BBC2



DOES THE billionaire villain get what he deserves?

Windfall blows hard—but it's all hot air

FILM

WINDFALL

Available now on Netflix

NETFLIX'S NEW thriller *Windfall* has a lot of style, but much less substance.

A man breaks into a billionaire's holiday home just as the billionaire and his wife come to stay. After the pair offer the man lots of money, they must spend a tense day and a half with each other as they wait for its delivery.

The score and cinematography go a long way to creating the vibe of an Alfred Hitchcock film. And the stage play feel of *Windfall* is enjoyable throughout.

But nothing really seems to lead to where it promises. *Windfall* sets up some interesting questions—then fails to answer all of them.

The thief seems to serve only as an outside influence that exposes the cracks in the

billionaire's relationship with his wife. His motives are largely unknown.

He tries to make a statement about wealth and inequality, but it all feels a bit forced.

The billionaire made his millions by designing an algorithm that calculates how redundant a person in a company is.

We can largely guess the effects of this. But the thief's anger towards him really pulls some punches.

Meanwhile, the billionaire's true colours become obvious as the film goes on.

He complains about the difficulties of being "a white rich guy". But even this gets disappointingly little pushback.

The pacing is also a little off. At times the tension carries well. Other moments seem to go on too long and offer too little.

Windfall culminates in a mixed bag of a third act. There are a couple of surprises. But there is

still a feeling that it could have had more to offer.

The film seems to rely on its slick look and feel. It gives very little away until the very end. But instead of something entirely surprising, what it gives us is a feeling that it has nothing to say.

Where it could have been a real statement, *Windfall* lazily avoided all the obvious issues. The billionaire is the villain of the piece, but he deserves more of a takedown.

The ending itself is not so much predictable.

If *Windfall* hadn't felt so much like it should have been a different film, it would have been more enjoyable. But all of the missing elements leave a kind of emptiness.

If you enjoy suspense and amazing visuals, you might still find a lot to like here.

But if you're expecting it to say something clever, you'll be disappointed.

Gabby Thorpe

PLAY

THE WHITE HANDKERCHIEF

Available now on BBC iplayer

THIS YEAR marks the fiftieth anniversary of Bloody Sunday.

As the people of Derry city came together to commemorate the event, a bold new piece of musical theatre was staged in the Guildhall.

The venue was the intended but never-reached destination for the 1972 civil rights march fired on by British soldiers.

Commissioned by the city's Playhouse Theatre, *The White Handkerchief* seeks to create a dramatic elegy to the 14 killed alongside those others injured.

The result is a bold experiment which renders the events of Bloody Sunday on a vivid new audio-visual canvas.

Filmed over nine months, this intimate portrait takes viewers into the heart of the production.

RADIO

MARGARET FULLER—EARLY FEMINIST AND WAR CORRESPONDENT

BBC World Service, 10.06 am, Thurs 31 Mar and then on BBC Sounds

MARGARET FULLER was one of the first Americans to argue for the rights of women to work, think and live on their own terms.

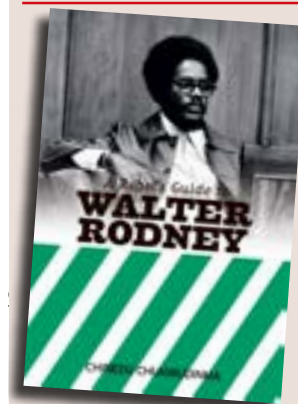
She was a trail blazer for advocacy journalism and for unrestricted female education.

Bridget Kendall talks to three Fuller experts still discovering the true extent of Fuller's life and work

What's on at...

Bookmarks

The socialist bookshop



A Rebel's Guide To Walter Rodney

With author Chinedu Chukwudinma

● Fri 1 Apr, 6.30pm, Bookmarks Bookshop
● Register online at bit.ly/RodneyBookmarks



Mainstream media outlets paint the Russian regime's brutality as being down to one man.

They take great pains to say Vladimir Putin's bad temper, a god complex, or some kind of mental ill health lies behind his decision to invade Ukraine.

If only it were that simple. The Putin story began during the era of the Soviet Union, which was made up of Russia and 14 other republics

It was a "state capitalist" society where the ruling class—the state bureaucracy—sought to accumulate capital on the back working-class people's labour. This had allowed it to become a world military power. But by the 1980s, it was in a deep economic and political crisis.

Sensing which way the wind was blowing, sections of the bureaucracy realised it would have to integrate into global capitalism and bring in free market reforms.

KGB secret policeman Putin was one such figure.

By 1990, he worked under St Petersburg's new mayor Anatoly Sobchack. The two fought to set up a new free market order, bringing in global investment and privatisation.

In August 1991, conservative sections of the Soviet bureaucracy and KGB units launched a coup in a last-ditch effort to save the old order.

In the capital Moscow, Boris Yeltsin—then president of the Russian part of the Soviet Union—put himself at the head of popular opposition to the coup.

In St Petersburg, Sobchak and Putin played a pivotal role in helping to defeat it.

The old order's failure precipitated the break-up of the Soviet Union. Although hailed as the installation of a new dawn for Russia, it wasn't exactly a changing of the guard.

FORMER Communist politicians simply morphed into "democratic" ones. And figures from the old Soviet bureaucracy had already positioned themselves to profit from the collapse.

A period of intense privatisation forged a group known as the "oligarchs"—super-rich, politically-connected businessmen.

This "wild west" capitalism, seemingly without rules, made this small group obscenely wealthy. But it also fuelled an intense social crisis—production collapsed by 50 percent, living standards plummeted and wages went unpaid.

And it weakened the state and the military-industrial complex, limiting Russia's ability to project its imperialist interests abroad. By 1993, Yeltsin and



VLADIMIR PUTIN at a press conference in 2017

IS PUTIN PULLING ALL THE STRINGS?

Does the drive for a new Russian empire simply reflect the needs of a singular ruler? Sarah Bates looks at the state machine behind Vladimir Putin



Boris Yeltsin

MPs were at loggerheads about how to manage the transition to free market capitalism.

The president sent in tanks to shell the parliament. He then pushed through a new constitution—written by Putin's mentor Sobchak—that concentrated power in the hands of the presidency.

This authoritarian political set up was designed to protect the new model of private profit-making of the 1990s.

Putin has built on it since



Since 1991, Russia has tried to reassert itself in its neighbouring countries

then, representing the interests of the wider Russian ruling class.

By 1999, Yeltsin was seen as a liability. He stood aside and his by then prime minister, Putin, took over.

Putin has since been portrayed as a "strongman" who brought the newly-minted capitalist class to heel. But the reality is closer to a mutually beneficial dynamic between the Russian state and the oligarchs.

He did curtail some of the excesses of the oligarchs—such

as enforcing limited taxation—but they, on the whole, have been willing to agree to his terms. In return, they have received many of the benefits of a well organised state.

Their method of profit making has been secured and entrenched.

THE Russian state plays an important role within the economy. Once the oligarchs looted state assets, they made sure to protect their market share from newcomers.

This meant that old state-owned industries and those which were privatised continued to dominate the economy, rather than new private ones.

But even the state-controlled oil and gas companies, Rosneft and Gazprom, are run on commercial lines with private shareholders.

Right up until the Russian invasion, British oil and gas giant BP continued to have a 20 percent stake in Rosneft with directors on its board.

The Russian state has continued to sell its stakes in private companies. In 2011 it began a privatisation programme of £29 billion worth of assets, including in oil, to combat the state's "excessive presence" in the economy.

This trend could, of course, reverse as foreign companies pull out of the country.

More broadly, the Russian state has followed many of the free market policies pushed by the US, Britain and European Union. In 2001 it brought a regressive flat tax—which hits the poorest hardest—and has used private finance type initiatives in schools.

No wonder then that Putin was given a warm welcome by Western politicians during his early years in office.

Then there was much talk about how Western and Russian interests could work together to enrich their respective ruling classes.

A state visit to Britain in 2003 saw Putin escorted to Buckingham Palace by cavalry, where a fancy banquet was laid on. It was all in aid of a key oil deal that saw BP solidify its interests in Russian oil.

"It fitted the geopolitical moment," said Tony Hayward, then-boss of the fossil fuel firm.

"Through the 2000s there was definitely a sense in the West that Russia could be brought ever closer into the fold." That sense was relatively short-lived.

Since 1991, Russia has tried to reassert itself in its neighbouring countries that were formerly of the Soviet Union, known as the "near abroad".

In Russia's weakened state, Yeltsin had relied on stirring up a series of separatist and ethnic conflicts to destabilise neighbours. But it took two brutal wars to subdue Chechnya when

it declared independence. Yeltsin lost the first war in 1994-96 amid opposition in Chechnya and on the streets of Russia. But from a position of strength in 1999-2000, Putin overwhelmed the Chechen resistance.

His military victory, and the spike in the oil prices in the 2000s, underpinned the regime's stability. It allowed Putin to build up the armed forces and use the country's oil and gas resources to grow in strength.

Meanwhile, the US, Nato and the EU had been trying to extend their influence in the "near abroad", which became an area of growing rivalries.

The first significant flashpoint came in Georgia in 2008 when Russia invaded two separatist regions to stop them from joining Nato.

In 2014 when Ukraine seemed like it would pivot toward the West, Russia annexed the Crimea and backed separatist insurgencies in Donetsk and Luhansk in the south east.

This aggression wasn't simply down to Putin and a small clique of generals and spooks around him. It was the Russian state pursuing its interests within imperialism, a global system of competing capitalist states (see pages 10&11). The same is true of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine today.

RUSSIA IS a major international player in exporting oil, gas and coal. It's also one of the world's biggest producers of several grains and raw materials necessary for production.

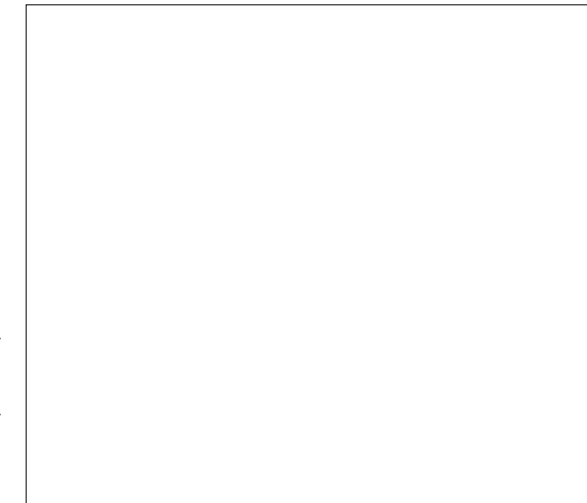
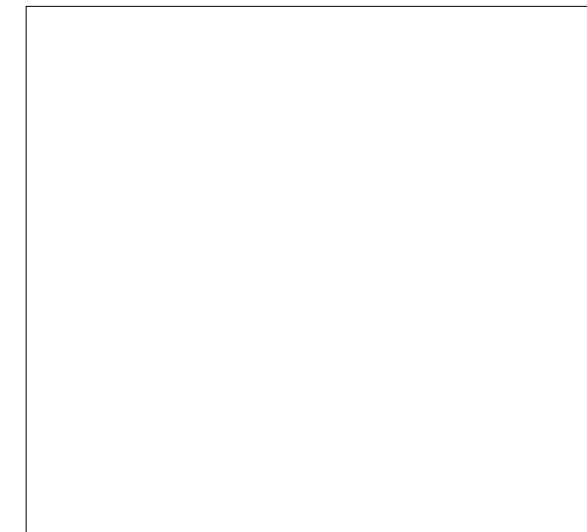
It's a country of 146 million people and is crammed full of nuclear weapons. Yet Italy, a nation with half the people and fewer natural resources to boast of, has an economy almost twice the size of Russia.

"Russia is incredibly unimportant in the global economy except for oil and gas," said Jason Furman, former economic advisor to Barack Obama. "It's basically a big gas station."

The invasion flows from the competitive pressures the Russian state was under.

The Minsk "peace process" in 2015 froze the Ukraine conflict, but the competition between the West and Russia continued. And Russia was losing in the face of the West's superior weight.

At the same time, the "near



Gas pipelines in Siberia (top) Nato troops (above)

abroad" has seen a series of uprisings in recent years—Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. While they're popular revolts, Western powers hope to gain from them.

The Russian state—not just Putin—hopes to send a signal to its neighbours that it can still dominate. Losing the war in Ukraine would be disastrous for the Russian state and its ruling class as a whole.

So what next for Putin? It's fair to say his campaign in Ukraine isn't going as well as he hoped.

Putin has built up support through Greater Russian Chauvinism—and is ramping it up now. But anger has broken through—for example, in 2011-12 amid election fraud, in 2018 over pensions and most recently in 2021.

These built on a broader feeling of resistance among workers. As the war in Ukraine drags on, there's nothing to say similar anti-government anger couldn't break through again.

READ MORE

● **Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism** by Vladimir Lenin £5.99 or at bit.ly/Highest0322

● **Stalinism's long shadow** by Tomáš Tengely-Evans International Socialist Journal bit.ly/stalinshadownisi

● **Arm yourself with the arguments—why it's right to oppose the Russian invasion and Nato** A selection of our key articles on Ukraine bit.ly/argumentswar

Available at Bookmarks, the socialist bookshop. Phone 020 7637 1848 or go to bookmarks bookshop.co.uk



Met police corruption runs deeper than report admits

Simon Basketter dissects the latest investigation into London's cops

THE Metropolitan Police's approach to tackling corruption is "dire" and "not fit for purpose". That is the conclusion of the latest damning report into the force.

HM Inspector of Constabulary Matt Parr said, "The force has sometimes behaved in ways that make it appear arrogant, secretive and lethargic. Its apparent tolerance of the shortcomings we describe in this report suggests a degree of indifference to the risk of corruption."

The findings are the result of a review that took place after an independent panel concluded that the Met was institutionally corrupt.

The panel had spent eight years investigating the unsolved 1987 murder of Daniel Morgan, which is mired in cop corruption and cover-up. Despite five police investigations, no one has ever been convicted of his murder.

The panel specifically slammed the Met and outgoing commissioner Cressida Dick for delaying and hindering the panel's attempts to look at corruption.

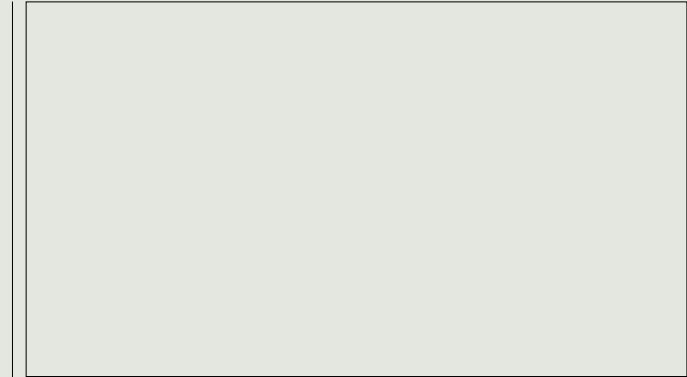
Parr said it was inexcusable that, 35 years on from the murder, the Met had still not taken steps to correct mistakes.

He added, "Corruption is almost certainly higher than the Met understands." A better description would be "than the Met admits".

In contrast to the panel report, Parr said he would not describe the Met as institutionally corrupt.

But the Morgan family said they believed that "institutional corruption" perfectly described the force.

They called on the home secretary and London mayor "to stop turning a blind eye to those within the Met who—at best—deliberately turned away from the stench of police corruption; those who sought to manage the fallout from that corruption instead of confronting it."



CRESSIDA DICK hindered corruption investigations after Daniel Morgan's murder

Despite treating institutional failures as merely incompetence, the report is damning.

"Woeful" record-keeping meant that more than 2,000 warrant cards belonging to officers who had left the force were unaccounted for.

This had "sinister" implications, given that serving Met officer Wayne Couzens used his card to abduct, rape and murder Sarah Everard in March last year.

The force's handling of exhibits was a "bit of a shambles", Parr said. This is rather polite considering there are hundreds of missing items, some most likely stolen by cops.

Firearms

It describes policies for keeping evidence items safe as "dire". Firearms tumbled out of cupboards when doors were opened. At one police station, the security code for a store was written on its door.

There were questions over gift and hospitality records—or bribes as they should be known.

The report said that the Met did not know whether

4,200 officers in sensitive posts had the correct level of security vetting. Those posts included child protection, major investigations and informant handling.

Parr noted that Scotland Yard has hired more than 100 people with criminal convictions in the last two years.

Having criminals in the cops points to the little discussed relationship between them.

Cops rely on inside information. Police informers have crimes ignored or used against them.

That in itself is a corrupting relationship.

Repeated reports have noted unauthorised police computer checks, providing criminals with details of police operations and documents.

That's why the inspectorate noted the failings of the IT systems that were supposed to monitor police activity.

Whether a cop is looking something up to stalk a victim, or help a crooked mate, is unlikely to be discovered.

As the Morgan family pointed out, "The lack of will to address the sickness of police corruption is too deeply institutionalised within the Met to allow it to respond in any meaningful or constructive way."

The reports come and go. Top cops come, saying they will bring change, and go having changed nothing.

What remains is that the police in general and Met in particular are "institutionally corrupt" to their rotten core.



Top cops come promising change, and go having changed nothing

Rishi Sunak fails to address deepening cost of living crisis

As inflation skyrockets, chancellor Rishi Sunak's spring statement does nothing to ease rising costs burdening working class people. **Charlie Kimber** and **Sophie Squire** explore the crisis

MULTI-MILLIONAIRE Tory chancellor Rishi Sunak utterly failed working class people in his spring statement last week. He made the political choice to let oil and gas giants keep making super profits while abandoning workers and the poor.

Facing a hurricane tearing away at people's living standards, Sunak did the equivalent of putting up a flimsy wind-break.

Hours before Sunak made his statement, official figures showed the RPI rate of inflation—the most accurate one—had risen to 8.2 percent.

If your pay or benefits are going up less than that, then you are facing a cut.

Jack Leslie, senior economist at the Resolution Foundation, said, "a huge income squeeze is coming" and it will be a "complete disaster for living standards".

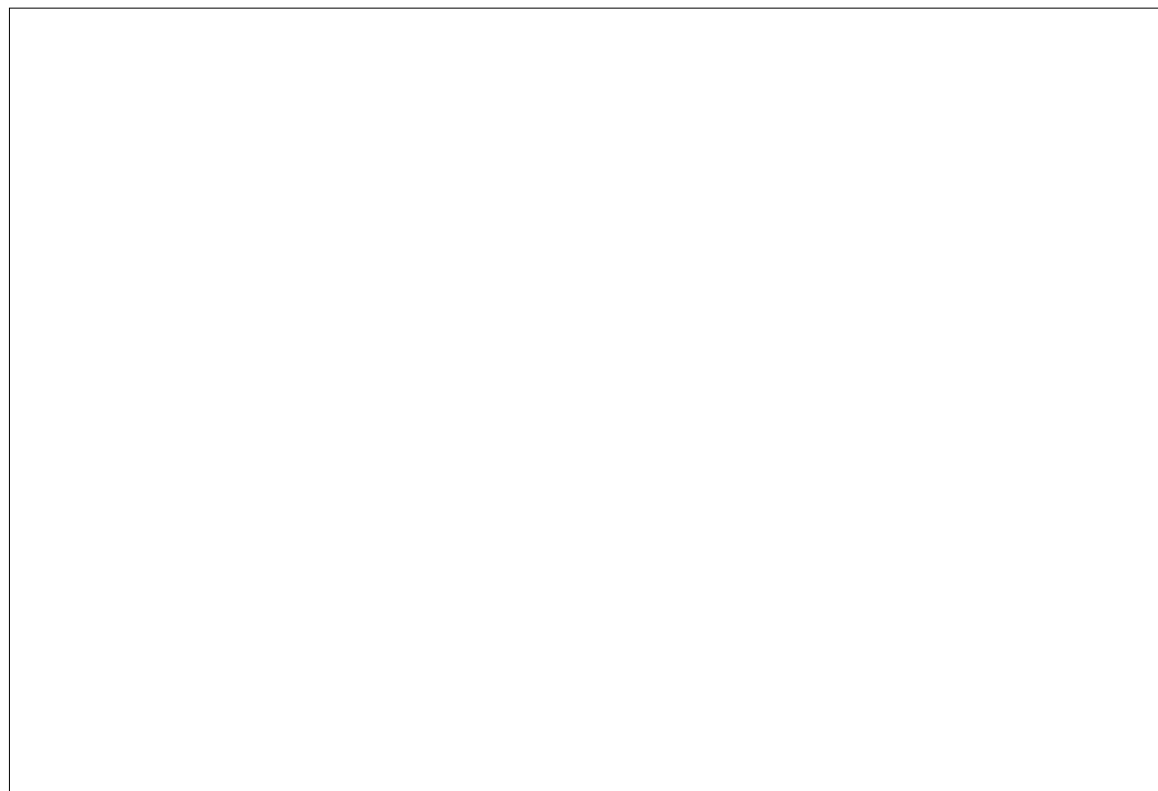
It's not a squeeze, it's a strangulation.

The tame Office for Budget Responsibility issued a stark document alongside the spring statement.

It warned, "The rise in inflation to a 40-year high this year is expected to see the biggest fall in living standards in any single financial year since records began in 1956-57."

Louise in Leicester told BBC 5 Live that her electricity bill "has gone up £120 a month".

"That's money off something else.



RISHI SUNAK'S 24-page plan contains no help for millions of struggling people

You dare not put your electric on. You can't put it on for 300-odd quid a month."

Sunak said he would cut the basic rate of income tax from 20 percent to 19 percent—but not until 2024. He claimed that was

a £5 billion tax cut for more than 30 million people.

But Sunak didn't say that high inflation means the government is set to take billions of pounds from workers because of last year's freeze in the income tax threshold.

That will reach £21 billion a year by 2025.

In any case, 42 percent of adults in Britain pay no income tax because their taxable income is less than the tax free allowance of £12,570.

Sunak has raised the point at

which workers will start paying national insurance to £12,570 a year.

But that won't come into effect until July, while rates go up 1.25 percentage points in April.

There's no extra money for health, schools or other public services.

There was nothing for people on Universal Credit or the state pension, which are going up by 3.1 percent this month while inflation will be over 8 percent.

An average £700 increase in annual energy bills, due to come in this week, is expected to be followed by a further £600-£1,000 rise in the autumn.

Council

There are also big rises now in food prices, rents, council tax, rail fares and broadband costs. And Sunak did nothing.

Crucially, he refused to impose a windfall tax on the oil and gas companies grabbing tens of billions of pounds in profits as energy prices rise.

That's a straight defence of capitalist priorities.

Labour and the Liberal Democrats have demanded a tax on the energy giants, but only as a one-off payment.

And they don't want the firms taken into democratic public ownership—the only way to hold down bills and plan for a sustainable future.

Inflation is avoidable—and it needs a response from below

INFLATION, the upward spiral of prices of goods and services, is presented as an unstoppable force of nature.

It is nothing of the kind. Instead it is the product of the chaotic and uncontrolled nature of free market capitalism.

It can be triggered in many ways. These include capitalists' reactions to sudden shortages of basic raw materials and a rise in the number of bosses using cheap debt to keep failing companies afloat.

The spiral can also begin when governments print more money to hand to banks and firms in a bid to stave off recession. That cash can then

flood into speculative markets, such as property.

All of these factors are at work in the present crisis.

First Covid and then the war in Ukraine have helped break global supply chains for raw materials.

As countries across the world began to fully reopen their economies after Covid lockdowns demand for oil and gas rose tenfold.

Producers keen to take advantage of the price rises that followed largely refused to increase the flow of fuel.

Wholesale companies also used shortages as an excuse for profiteering. They bumped up their petrol and gas



Empty trolleys for those who can't afford food

prices to grab as much profit as possible.

By the end of this year oil companies are expected to hand over £60 billion to shareholders.

In a system built on fossil fuels rising prices will impact the production and distribution of almost every product on the market. This will lead to a price spiral.

Firms that can will pass increased costs on to their customers in a bid to maintain profits.

But some, particularly those firms whose customers cannot afford the higher prices, will be forced out of business.

Capitalism uses markets to ensure that the people that suffer the burden of rising prices

are workers and the poor—not the bosses.

Supermarkets raising the price of goods—especially on the cheapest "basics" ranges—will mean many will go hungry.

But a few hundred pounds extra a month for food is nothing to chancellor Rishi Sunak—he'd happily spend that on a single meal out.

There is, however, a political price for the Tories as the inflation spiral continues.

Even many right wing newspapers have criticised Sunak's spring statement for failing to help those hit hardest by the economic crisis.

But the right's solution

to rising inflation is to allow to let rip the free market. That means ending safety restrictions to allow cheaper food to be produced.

And, though they will never admit it, it means making workers pay for the crisis by allowing benefits and wages to be devalued by inflation.

Instead, the government should use its power to impose price controls on all essential goods.

Trade unions should combine their demands for pay rises of at least inflation with demands for government action on prices. That would help people on benefits and pensions withstand the tide of price rises.

IN BRIEF

Bearing down on bosses in Peterlee

AROUND 200 workers at car bearing factories in County Durham are striking over pay.

Strikes hit manufacturers NSK Bearings and AKS Precision Ball in Peterlee which is part of the supply chain for VW, Toyota and Renault.

The entire shopfloor workforce at the factories owned by NSK Europe will strike every Wednesday and Saturday for six weeks after a 1.6 percent pay offer.

Strikes began last Wednesday.

Drivers hold up drink distribution

HGV DRIVERS employed by DHL Tradeteam in Burton-on-Trent are set to strike for 72 hours twice over unmanageable delivery routes.

Strikes are set to begin on Wednesday until Friday of next week, and continue from next Sunday until the following Tuesday.

Workers are on the Molson Coors contract that delivers for lager company Carling.

The dispute was triggered by the company going back on a deal on pay and recruitment made last year.

Gas ballot could ignite pay action

UP TO 2,000 workers for gas supplier Cadent are voting on whether to strike.

The ballot is set to close on Friday of next week, meaning strikes could begin as early as 22 April.

The members of the GMB union refused a pay offer of just four percent earlier this year. While workers suffer the company is still making sizeable profits, last year alone the company made £901 million.

Balls to Wimbledon overtime attack

WIMBLEDON parking wardens are making a “racquet” over plans to cut their overtime rates, their GMB Union says.

Merton Council, in south London, plans to cut the overtime pay of those tasked with keeping the traffic moving during the Wimbledon tennis tournament fortnight.

The union says industrial action is possible.

Meeting to discuss DWP jobs fight

UNION REPS in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) were set to meet on Thursday of this week to discuss a fight to save jobs.

Bosses announced plans earlier in March to close some 42 offices where benefits payments are processed.

The PCS union warns at least 1,000 jobs at 13 sites could be at risk, with no option to relocate or transfer the workers affected.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Rally boosts Coventry bin strikers—now step up the action and solidarity

by ISABEL RINGROSE

OVER 300 energised people gathered in Coventry city centre on Saturday to support 73 striking HGV2 drivers.

The Unite union strikers, that began strikes in January, want the council to change its grading system so that they are paid in line with the market rate.

But the Labour council is still hiring scab labour to break the strike through Tom White Waste, which is wholly-owned by them.

It pays the scabs more than the strikers are demanding. And union rep Pete Randle has been suspended on trumped-up charges.

Striker Anthony told Socialist Worker that the turnout “has been amazing. People are starting to come round and know what this council is doing to us—not just to us drivers, but the whole workforce.”

We’re not just out to benefit ourselves in the long run, but for everyone.”

Strength

Anthony explained that after over 50 days of striking, “Solidarity on the picket line is getting better, not worse. The strength is there and everyone is backing each other.”

Addressing the rally, Unite general secretary Graham slammed the council’s behaviour as “disgusting”.

And she had a direct message for Coventry’s Labour councillors. “You will no longer be able to hold office

in my union or be part of our structures while we investigate your behaviour,” she said. “You’re not getting your hands on any of Unite’s money for the upcoming elections. Shame on you.”

Strikers held posters of their wage slips to crush lies from the council that they’re paid £52,000. In reality the workers earn between £22,183 and £27,741 a year.

Striker Teresa told Socialist Worker, “We deserve fair pay. And we’re against all the disgusting lies the council are saying about us. All the misinformation from the

council is shameful—I’m ashamed of their attitude. We’re fighting with all our strength.”

Anthony thinks the strike could escalate to other council workers, especially bin carriers. “The carriers are the next ones. They’re being bullied into doing unsafe roles because the rounds are now five times as large,” he said.

Striker and Union convenor Haydn Jones told the rally, “This is because of the crap wages they want to pay us. We will not go back until they’ve paid the rate and there’ll be no further negotiations until Pete

Randle is reinstated and the bogus claims are withdrawn. We will not accept bullying anymore.”

All trade unionists should stand with Coventry strikers. And Unite national leaders have to step up the solidarity.

Big pickets of the scab company and the recruitment firm that has supplied it with workers could increase the pressure. So could a day of action, including walkouts, across the council.

The local elections on 5 May are an opportunity to raise the strike and hold protests. No candidate or campaigner

should escape without going on the record as to whether they genuinely back the strike or not—and the union should make such responses public.

And Keir Starmer’s Labour Party should not receive a penny of Unite money when its councillors are seeking to break a union and leave workers in poverty.

● Support the strike: Coventry bin worker’s strike fund: Unity Trust Bank a/c Unite WM/7116 Branch Coventry Local Government, Sort code 60-83-01, a/c no. 20302665. Messages of support to **Pete. Randle@uniteunion.org**



STRIKING HGV2 drivers protest in Coventry on Saturday

PICTURE: SOCIALIST WORKER

UNIVERSITIES

University battle at key point—vote for strikes and demand new strategy

AS WORKERS at 27 universities began a five day strike on Monday it was clear there are urgent questions about how their battles can win.

UCU union members have been fighting for months to stop massive cuts to the USS pension scheme. They are simultaneously fighting over workloads, casualisation, pay and inequalities—known as the “four fights”.

On Monday a meeting of the UCU Left group discussed the way forward. The disputes can still be won but there needs to be a sharp change.

Mark Abel from Brighton university said, “I don’t think there’s a sign of this dispute crumbling.” But he

added, “Those at the top of the union have tried to demobilise, decouple and deescalate these strikes. We need a strategy with a chance of winning.”

Right from the start of the action last December, union general secretary Jo Grady had to be pushed to call anything but the most meagre strikes—and not to separate the two disputes.

Her reluctant and divisive strategy has never been wholly overcome. And now Grady seems content for workers to become gradually disenchanted with the battles.

UCU members are voting on whether to renew the strike mandate. A big vote for more action, at as many universities as

possible, would show the determination to keep striking. But that’s been undermined by a lack of direction from the top and restricting the time for the voting to just three weeks.

Boycott

Activists at the UCU Left meeting discussed if a boycott of exam marking could be an effective tactic. But many argued it had to be combined with strikes.

“A marking boycott will likely mean employers will withhold all or a large part of our wages as a tool to try and break us. This means we can’t just stop at marking. We need to have strikes as well,” said Anne from Cambridge university. Mark from Liverpool

added, “At our university during an earlier dispute, strikers came under enormous pressure from management to get back to work and complete marking.”

“It was picket lines and members’ meetings that kept people together. That meant we could beat back a wave of redundancies.”

There’s no doubt that large numbers of workers are still up for taking on university bosses.

At the university of Nottingham on Monday, a delegation of CWU union members joined UCU pickets.

There were strong pickets at Keele university, Dundee university, Sheffield university, Liverpool university, Westminster

university and other institutions.

In Swansea strikers chalked “Another uni is possible” on the road.

And in a local battle happening at the same time, Staffordshire university workers are striking for two additional days against plans to create a two-tier workforce.

Bosses want to employ new staff on worse contracts than the present ones.

The push for more strikes nationally—and escalating action—has to be linked to a more democratic structure that reflects the views of workers on the front line.

● For the UCU Left statement go to bit.ly/UCULeft0322 Sophie Squire

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Bin workers can win as pay fights spread

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

BIN WORKERS in several councils continue to hit back at rubbish pay and bad conditions.

Striking Adur and Worthing bin workers are now into their third week of strikes, with big picket lines.

Their GMB union agreed to preliminary talks with the council this week but did not commit to calling off the strikes. And workers at a mass meeting made it clear they wanted to stay out.

The ultimate objective of the strike is for all affected workers to be escalated up the grading system.

They want to go onto the top incremental level of the next grade.

Refuse collectors in **Barrow** will strike for a further six days after bosses at FCC Environment offered them a real term pay cut.

Workers have already completed nine days of strikes this year and were set to walk out on Wednesday. Then strikers will return to picket lines again from Wednesday of next week.

In **Manchester** around



FIGHTING ON in Adur and Worthing

PICTURE: GMB SOUTHERN REGION

200 workers employed by waste management company Biffa also plan to strike.

Biffa refuses to raise workers wages above the 1.75 percent that other local government workers had been offered last year.

And also against Biffa, workers at **East Sussex** Joint Waste Partnership depots at Hailsham and Uckfield are completing a strike ballot.

Biffa provides refuse and recycling services across

the Wealden district for around 70,000 homes. GMB members are demanding pay rises which would see loaders on £12.50 an hour and HGV drivers on £17.50 an hour.

Workers for **North Somerset** council plan to strike after the North Somerset Environment Company offered just a 4.5 percent pay award—over two years.

Earlier this month almost 100 workers voted to take action to improve their pay.

Tim Northover, GMB regional organiser said, “More members are joining every day.”

A five-day strike involving 100 bin workers in **Solihull** against outsourcer Amey has been called off after bosses offered a 5.26 percent pay deal.

But, rightly, workers almost chucked out the offer. It’s still well below inflation and 44 percent of workers voted to reject.

CIVIL SERVICE

Battle of British Council

WORKERS AT the British Council struck against job cuts on Thursday and Friday of last week. Bosses want a reorganisation that could slash as many as 20 percent of jobs.

PCS union members struck at offices in London, Manchester, Edinburgh and Cardiff.

The union’s demands include no forced redundancies and no outsourcing of jobs.

Tom, a PCS rep at

the British Council in Manchester, told *Socialist Worker*, “They’re making between 25 and 30 percent of people redundant. There’s privatisation and outsourcing of jobs on the way.”

■PCS MEMBERS have voted 81 percent in for industrial action on a 45 percent turnout in consultative ballot over the national pay claim. The union should now move quickly to a formal ballot and hard-hitting strikes.

SCHOOLS



Unity on the picket line

Strike takes on academy

TEACHERS AND support staff are striking at Walthamstow Primary Academy in east London over pay, bullying and unequal treatment and workload. They began with a one-day action on Thursday of last week and planned further strikes on Tuesday and Wednesday this week.

The school is run by United Learning and most of the staff are black and Asian women.

Workers on the well-attended picket line said they are taking on an autocratic, bullying

management team. Among the examples of outrageous treatment they gave was a permanent teacher who was denied maternity pay.

A temporary staff member who worked for two years was laid off without proper notice.

The head’s response to the strike was to put a PA system in the playground and play a song called “It’s my fight” to staff and children.

●Send solidarity messages to sandra.faria@neu.org.uk and paul.phillips@neu.org.uk
Amanda Squire

EQUAL PAY

Strikes off in Glasgow as council makes concession

TRADE UNIONS in Glasgow were celebrating last week as threats of walkouts forced the city council to make key concessions.

Unison, Unite and GMB members were due to strike on Tuesday and Wednesday of this week.

The 12,000 workers are battling to get the council to honour its promises in their long running battle over equal pay.

Strikes in 2018 won workers a lump sum paid out the following year and promises of a new pay scale to overhaul the old sexist system that saw women paid less than men.

They are now fighting for another lump sum since the new pay scale isn’t due to be implemented for several more years.

The council has now pledged to honour the

system for working out 2019 lump sums, and new amounts will be paid to workers by October.

The Unison Glasgow branch said, “Well done to members who so clearly demonstrated their willingness to strike. Let’s maintain and build on the organising we have done. There will be further battles ahead no doubt.”

Strike dates for 20 and 21 April are still live—workers should be prepared to walk out to focus the council’s mind once again.

■CAMPAIGNERS opposing the closure of Glasgow cultural venues were set to protest on Tuesday this week. Venues including the People’s Palace and Winter Gardens, and St Mungo’s Museums have been shut for over two years.

PALLETS

Widen action at Chep UK

SOME 70 pallet workers at Chep UK in Greater Manchester have been out over pay since December. The Unite union members are fighting for a pay rise.

During the pandemic they were repeatedly told they were valued.

Yet workers were offered only a 1.8 percent pay rise for 2021. This was raised to just 2 percent after they threatened strikes.

The company grabbed £60 million profit last year. Shareholders took £50 million.

Unite has targeted Chep’s customers but must continue to escalate action against the company—which has other sites including Bristol, Birmingham and Thurrock. Local trade unionists have supported the strikers, and this is vital to keep up the fight.

●Donations to Unity Bank NW/1 Strike Fund. Sort code 60-83-01 Account 20217873

BUS DRIVERS

Hundreds out at Arriva

HUNDREDS OF Arriva bus workers in south London struck on Monday and Tuesday over pay.

The action had been postponed last week after the workers’ Unite union presented a new offer of 3 percent.

That was a slight improvement on the original 1.5 percent from the bosses, but still means a real terms 5 percent pay cut with inflation over 8 percent.

But workers, based at depots in Croydon, Norwood and Thornton Heath, chucked this out and went ahead with the strike.

■AROUND 1,000 drivers at London United have rejected one offer of 2.5 percent pay offer and then another of 3.1 percent. But Unite has set no dates for action.

They could be out with the Arriva drivers.

P&O

Don’t rely on law at P&O

>>>Continued from back page now. They’ve got to get into Calais yet. And what are the French dockers going to do?”

The Nautilus union also reported that large numbers of the agency workers that P&O recruited to replace the crew have already walked off the job.

As union officials point out, if P&O gets away with the sackings, bosses at other ferry companies will follow suit. Lee told the demonstration that P&O bosses were considering extending their attacks to shore staff.

That’s why unions should at the very least call on their members in the docks and other ferry companies to join the P&O workers’ demonstrations. Acting together, they can effectively shut down the ports.

One member of the Dover Shipping branch who works for the Port of Dover told *Socialist Worker*, “Most of the mooring gangs

are RMT, so they don’t have to tie the ships up.

“The French and the Dutch won’t tie them up so we have to take a leaf out of their book.”

RMT national secretary Darren Procter told the rally in Dover, “The next few days are going to be pivotal.

“The one thing we need is for those ships to be up against the wall until such time as our members are put back on them, and as much pressure to be put on the Maritime and Coastal Agency and the politicians to make sure that that happens.

“Take this fight to the street if that’s where it needs to be. And if we need to back this motorway up as far as it needs to be then we’ll do it.”

The RMT was this week set to hold protests outside the offices of agencies supplying new crews. But to get workers’ jobs back, action needs to focus on blocking the ports and stopping the ships from sailing.

P&O FIGHT HANGS IN THE BALANCE

by NICK CLARK

SACKED P&O ferry workers protested again at ports in Dover, Liverpool and Hull on Saturday—just days before a crunch deadline imposed by bosses.

Workers had until Thursday this week to decide whether to accept an “enhanced” redundancy package.

P&O bosses hope that workers will sign up—and effectively accept their sackings.

They say the “enhanced” packages include compensation for their refusal to consult workers and trade unions on the redundancy plans.

But they threaten to leave workers with only the bare minimum statutory redundancy payments if they don’t accept the package in the next few days.

It’s effectively blackmail designed to force workers to give up the fight to get their jobs back—and get around the law.

Admitted

P&O chief executive Peter Hebblethwaite taunted unions and the government last week when he admitted in parliament he ignored the law.

He said there was “no doubt” that P&O should have consulted unions before announcing the sackings.

But he said he decided not to—and that he would do so again—to force through a new crewing structure to save bosses’ profits.

Sacked workers at the protest in Dover on Saturday were furious.

“What I would say to Peter Hebblethwaite is he needs to find a mirror and have a word with himself,” one told Socialist Worker.

“If there is an abyss that you could get to the bottom of, he’s achieved it.”

Hebblethwaite’s admission undercuts the unions’ reliance on the law to get workers’ jobs back.



SACKED P&O union members join a protest in the port of Dover last week

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

RMT and Nautilus union leaders hoped the government would intervene to force P&O to reinstate the workers.

But the most the law could force P&O to do is to pay workers compensation—something Hebblethwaite says is included in the redundancy package.



The Tories are furious that P&O bosses embarrassed them

In other words, P&O bosses have calculated that they can factor in the cost of breaking the law and get away with it.

Tory minister Grant Shapps said the government planned to bring a package of measures to parliament on Wednesday in response to P&O’s actions that would “force them to U-turn.”

The Tories are furious that P&O bosses embarrassed them by brazenly admitting to ignoring the law.

Yet minutes of a meeting between Shapps and P&O bosses in November reveal he essentially agreed bosses would “need to make changes.”

All that Shapps has actually promised is legislation to force P&O to pay its workers the minimum wage while at sea.

In a meeting with RMT

union officials on Friday, P&O bosses refused to say this would make them reconsider employing a new, lower paid crew.

And in any case, the sacked workers shouldn’t have to accept a huge pay cut to get their jobs back.

Minimum

As Lee Davison, a sacked worker and secretary of RMT Dover Shipping branch told Socialist Worker, “I’m a seafarer 30 years. Why should I accept minimum wage? What we do is not a minimum wage job.”

Some workers on the demonstration insisted they wouldn’t sign up to the redundancy package. Others said signing up wouldn’t mean the end of the fight.

But just a handful of

workers were on the march. And the Financial Times newspaper reports that some 500 of the 800 sacked workers have already accepted redundancy terms.

“I can’t blame anyone if they do sign these packages,” said one worker. “All I can say is that they’ve been bullied into it.”

Lee said the union was looking into ways of challenging the redundancy package through the law.

“Our legal team are looking at avenues about whether they’re legit, whether we’ve been forced to sign under duress,” he said.

But, he added, “the clock is ticking.”

Join People’s Assembly protests in solidarity with P&O workers on Saturday. Go to thepeoplesassembly.org.uk

UNIONS NEED A NEW PLAN OF ATTACK

UNIONS urgently need another strategy to hit P&O’s profits—one aimed at stopping the ships from sailing and blocking the ports.

More workers could sign up to the redundancy packages if the RMT doesn’t mount a fight that offers real hope of getting their jobs back.

So far, only one P&O ferry service is still sailing, from Liverpool to Dublin, where the crew is employed under Dutch law and unaffected by the sackings.

Every other P&O ferry is stuck in the docks as bosses desperately try to train the new crews—costing the company millions every day.

But the unions say the new crews are under-trained, and their shift patterns unsafe.

And in a sign of P&O’s vulnerability, authorities on Friday blocked the P&O ferry connecting Larne and Cairnryan on safety grounds.

Failures

The Maritime and Coastal Agency detained the European Causeway vessel “due to failures on crew familiarisation, vessel documentation and crew training”.

The workers can look to their own action—and solidarity from other workers—to drive home the pressure on P&O.

Some workers on the protest in Dover were hopeful that dockers could stop P&O ships from sailing. Dockers in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, reportedly refused to load a P&O ferry staffed with a skeleton crew that was bound for Hull.

“I reckon there’s a chance to stop the ships from sailing,” one told Socialist Worker. “It’s crucial

>>Continued on page 19